

Modern Philology

VOLUME XII

October 1914

NUMBER 4

FALSTAFF

In Shakespeare criticism, as in most things Anglo-Saxon but sport, there has been little professionalism. The best as well as the worst of our scientists and artists have done their work without learning how to do it, and our critics, like our soldiers, have won their Waterloos on cricket fields. For two hundred and fifty years Englishmen and Americans have been writing about the character of Falstaff, and hardly three or four of these have been students of the stage. Since 1777 they have followed in the steps of Maurice Morgann,¹ a country gentleman of philosophic bent and literary taste who seems to have known little of the acted drama and to have loved it less. In reading Shakespeare he is not reminded of Plautus or Terence, of Fletcher or Molière. We all know what sort of opinions, in ignorance of technique and historic development, were entertained in Morgann's time by men so delicate in sensibility as Walpole and Shelley, concerning Greek sculpture, Italian painting, and Gothic architecture; and is it likely that his opinion concerning Falstaff, though in England and America it has stood now for much more than a century, should be less fallible? Time establishes institutions, not truth. But though still we may hear that pointed construction was the immediate expression of the gloom and aspiration of the Middle Ages, and that groined vaulting and pillared aisles were devised in imitation of God's first temple, the over-arching

¹ *An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff*, often since reprinted, and twice within the last ten years.

forest, Anglo-Saxons have had their eyes opened to the technique of art as not to the technique of the play. What might be called the external history of the drama has been explored, but technique has been neglected, and still anybody ventures to write on Shakespeare who has a style and taste. Few among these would appreciate the remark of Stevenson that to read a play is as difficult as to read musical score. And to read an old play is as difficult as to read old score.

Morgann reads like a true Romantic, and discovers in the effect of Falstaff upon us in the two Parts of *Henry IV* an opposition between feeling and the understanding. "Shakespeare has contrived to make secret impressions upon us of courage in favor of a character which was to be held up for sport and laughter on account of actions of apparent cowardice and dishonor." Falstaff's conduct is cowardly; his character, that subtler essence, is courageous.¹ Contrary to what we might expect, the cowardice and dishonor, which are perceived by the understanding, are the obvious traits, those "thrust forward and pressed upon our notice"; and the favorable mental impressions are attained to in the case of Morgann himself, not by the mystical faculty alleged, but through deliberate conjecture and devious ratiocination, that is, by the understanding, too. Whatever the process, the direct effect of the incidents of Gadshill and Shrewsbury, of Falstaff's confessions, and of the downright ridicule of him by the Prince, Lancaster, and Poins, is counteracted, he thinks, by inferences from the incidental testimony of characters such as Doll Tearsheet, Shallow, Lord Bardolph, and the Chief-Judge, and by such circumstances as his earlier "familiarity" with John of Gaunt, a "dozen captains" calling him to court, and his appearance once on the eve of battle in the presence of the King. At times the critic goes farther, and, in the faith that Shakespeare's characters are "essentially different from those of other writers," considers Falstaff as if he were an "historic rather than dramatic being,"² inquiring adventurously into his hopeful youth, his family, and his station, and inferring from these that he must have had the

¹ Cf., among many, Professor Bradley, *Oxford Lectures. The Rejection of Falstaff*, p. 266: "sometimes behaves in a cowardly way, but that does not show that he was a coward."

² Ed. 1820, pp. 61, 66.

constitutional instincts of courage although he had lost the principles which ordinarily accompany them.¹ So firmly has this notion of Falstaff as a real person taken hold of him that now and then he breaks out into exclamations against the "malice" from which Falstaff's reputation suffers, appeals to the reader's good nature to right him, and when confronted with the more unequivocal acts and utterances of his favorite can but call them "unfortunate," and, as if he were a friend in trouble, deplore his loquacity in soliloquy and "imprudence" in deed.² In this spirit of unaesthetic kindness, and in accordance with his principle of preferring to the prominent and obvious what is latent and obscure, he discredits the testimony of Lancaster and Poins as prompted by envy and ill-will, and the Prince's as given in raillery, makes much of the compliment implied in the surrender of that "famous knight and most valorous enemy" Colville of the Dale, and is of the opinion that a man who takes captives, and jests and dallies on a battlefield, has not got so frightened as to lose his presence of mind. Love of humor is the mainspring of his character: he falls flat at Shrewsbury for a jest and none of his lies and braggadocios is intended to deceive. The escapade of Gadshill, which in the story Shakespeare puts first, Morgann considers, as the "source of much unreasonable prejudice," last, and even if it must be thought an exhibition of cowardice holds it to be a single exception. The virtue of the jest afterward at Eastcheap is in the "reproof of the lies," which are but humor, and not in the exposure of the cowardice, which is a venial and momentary aberration.

In sum and substance and often in minute detail these views have been reproduced by English critics since³—by Coleridge and Swinburne, by Hazlitt, Lloyd, and Maginn, who make a jest even of the flight from Gadshill, and most elaborately, though most subtly of

¹ There is excellent comment on this trick of Morgann's and its effect on Shakespeare criticism since, in Mr. A. B. Walkley's *Drama and Life: Professor Bradley's Hamlet*, I cannot help thinking, however, that the fallacy would have prevailed even had Morgann never perpetrated it.

² Critics have kept something of this tone of the apologist to the present day, as Professor Bradley, *Oxford Lectures*, pp. 266, 268, note.

³ This is my only justification for paying so much attention to the ingenious but unpleasing arguments of a critic so far removed in time; this, and the stamp of approval laid upon them by Swinburne, Professor Bradley, and perhaps most remarkable of all, the student of roguery, Professor F. H. Chandler, in his introduction to *Henry IV* in

all, by Professor A. C. Bradley. His main achievement is the development, after Rötscher and others, of Morgann's notion of Falstaff as a "military freethinker" into that of one who by his humor dissolves away into words and airy nothings not only honor but those other obstacles and "nuisances"—truth, duty, devotion to one's country, the terrors of death and religion, everything in short that makes life real and earnest, thereby "lifting us into an atmosphere of perfect freedom."¹ Among the Germans Falstaff the philosopher has passed unchallenged, but among these students of the technique and history of the drama he has generally had to bear the badge of a coward too.

Johnson scoffed at his friend Morgann's innovation, and critics since have been disposed to pay him back in his coin. But they would hardly have been so quick to do it to Dryden, though twice explicitly and without qualification he calls Falstaff liar, coward, glutton, and buffoon.² And Thomas Fuller, Oldmixon, and all the seventeenth century with them take it for granted that he is nothing else.³ Since then the world had moved on a bit; yet a critical opinion on the drama propounded amid all the vagaries of the heyday of Romanticism, by one neither a dramatist nor a student of the drama, is on the face of it quite as questionable as the contrary opinion which till then had stood unimpeached.

Not only is Morgann strangely confused and contradictory in that, finding the circumstances creditable to Falstaff thrown into the background, and the "folly and the buffoonery" thrown into the foreground, he calls us, who attach greater importance to the latter, the dupes of our wisdom and systematic reasoning, but thus the Tudor edition. Even the Germans, as I suggest below, owe more to Morgann than they may be aware. Among English critics two conspicuous exceptions are Mr. Court-hope (*History of English Poetry*, IV, 114) and Mr. E. K. Chambers (*Red Letter Shakespeare*, introduction to *Henry IV*, Part II); but they give no reasons and permit themselves no more than an oracular sentence.

¹ *Oxford Lectures*, pp. 262-63.

² *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (Every Man's Library), p. 43: "old, fat, merry, cowardly, drunken, amorous, vain, and lying"; Ingleby's *Shakespeare Allusion-Book* (ed. Munro), II, 246: "a lyar, a coward, a Glutton, and Buffon, because all these qualities may agree in the same man."

³ Ingleby, *op. cit.*; Fuller, I, 486, "make-sport in all plays for a coward"; II, 43, "coward," "Buffoone"; Oldmixon, II, 431; George Daniel, I, 507; cf. Captain Alexander Smith, *Compleat History of the Lives and Robberies, etc.*, 1719, I, 1 f., who takes it that Shakespeare intended him for "a grand coward," and what Mr. Chandler, *Literature of Roguery*, p. 175, says about his thinking Falstaff none, has to do only with the Fastolf of history and legend.

and otherwise he betrays a total misapprehension of dramatic method, whether of his own or of an earlier time. It is all too plain that he cannot read score. To him, as to many another philosopher and literateur, Shakespeare is not score to be played, but a book to be read; and a really great dramatist is one who dupes us, deliberately misplaces the emphasis, transcendently baffles men's wits. Yet of all dramatists down to Dumas and Ibsen—and even of them—the contrary is the case. What is in the foreground is important; what is in the background is less important, and, in Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, often epically, rather than dramatically and psychologically, in keeping.¹ And what stands first in the play, as the cowardly flight from Gadshill, is most important of all and dominates the whole. Besides these simple principles of dramatic emphasis and perspective, which in our discussion will constantly be illustrated, Morgann and his followers ignore the various hints of the poet as embodied in the established conventions of the time—the confessions in soliloquy, the comments and predictions of important undiscredited characters like the Prince and Poins, and various devices and bits of "business," like Falstaff's roaring as he runs and his falling flat in battle. All these are as much means of expression as the Elizabethan vocabulary of the text, and yet they are treated as if they had no fixed and definite meaning—as if, as someone has said, the book had dropped from the skies; and the playwright and his time vanish from his play. So far has this gone that, as we have seen, inquiry presses coolly by him to the character's lineage, financial and social experiences, and his past as a whole. It was but yesterday that an Elizabethan scholar contended that we had a right to do this, and that characters in plays, particularly in Shakespeare's, were not unreal like statues and paintings. They can think, talk, and walk—they are bits of real life, not art!

On the principle that what is most prominent is most important surely there is no need to dwell: of art it is the beginning and end. Of the correlative principle that the first impression is designedly the dominant one there is in the case of Shylock a remarkable illustration which I have exhibited elsewhere,² and even in the plays of

¹ See my article "Hamlet and Iago," *Kiltredge Anniversary Papers* (Boston, 1913).

² See in the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 1911, my article "Shylock," pp. 240-41.

Ibsen we have only apparent exceptions to the rule. If Helmer in the *Doll's House* is not the heroic character, and Nora not the frivolous one, they may at first appear to be, that first impression is corrected not by "secret" impressions and insignificant details such as Morgann discovers, but by subsequent revelations which loom large and for which every preparation has been made. They do not counteract and contradict; they consummate and fulfil; and the same character moves and wavers, discloses itself and shrinks together again, before our eyes. Ibsen makes us the dupes, not of our wisdom but of our stupidity, and then for no more than moments. Such plays, however, are not Shakespeare's; his involve processes which unfold primarily not character but events; and at the end, except for casual conversions, his characters are pretty much what they were at the beginning. [Falstaff is as much of a coward sprawling on Shrewsbury Field as running down Gadshill.] What, then, do these facts mean? as Mr. Bradley asks after having detailed the "secret impressions." "Does Shakespeare put them all in with no purpose at all, or in defiance of his own intention?" He never defies his own intention, I suppose, save in the hands of us critics. The incongruities, as I hope presently to show, are either necessarily or traditionally involved in the type of the *miles gloriosus* which he is here undertaking to exhibit; or they are incidental to the current convention of the professional comic person on the stage; or else they are such contradictions and irrelevancies as Shakespeare, writing for the stage and not for the study, slips into continually, examples of which in one play have, with admirable discernment, been collected by Mr. Bradley himself.¹

Meantime we take it that, standing first, "this unfortunate affair" of Gadshill is *meant* to prejudice us. In itself it is an example of the old device of a practical joke on the stage, not disdained by Molière and Goldoni, Goldsmith and Sheridan, any more than by the Elizabethans, and in farce not extinct today. According to Elizabethan usage a foolish character—a braggart, or a coward, or a conceited ass like Malvolio, or even a merry misogynist like Benedick

¹ *Shakespearean Tragedy*, pp. 265-68. The contradictions involved in Shakespeare's time-references, again, are without number; since the days of Wilson they have been turned into a miracle of art.

—is, by conspiracy, fooled to the top of his bent, and in the end made aware of it and jeered at. Of this there are many instances in the comedies of Shakespeare, as in those of Marston, Chapman, Dekker, and the rest of the craft. Always the expectations of the practical jokers—as here in Falstaff's cowardly conduct and “incomprehensible lies”—are fulfilled, and the victim's ridiculous sayings and doings cast in his teeth. Sometimes he loses temper, like Malvolio and Benedick; sometimes he takes to his wits to cover his retreat, like Falstaff. But at the outset he steps into the trap laid for him, unawares. There is no instance of a character making a fool of himself on purpose—playing the coward on purpose¹ and then playing the ludicrous braggart afterward. To an audience such an ambiguous situation would have been incomprehensible. In Part II, when the Prince and Poins overhear Falstaff slandering them, they force him this time to admit that he did not know them as well as the Lord that made them. In neither incident could he have played a part any more than Parolles when he slanders and, as he thinks, betrays his master and all the leaders of his army;² in either case we have a convention, a bit of stage language, we might say, almost as precise and ascertainable in meaning as any old word or phrase in the text, but then current in the same acceptation on the Continent and in after times as well. The overhearing and confronting of the backbiter or plain-speaker is a device employed in *Le monde où l'on s'ennuie*³ as in the *Fourberies de Scapin*.

There are indeed some few instances of the victim, not a fool as thought, detecting the trap; but he gets even, like the Merry Wives of Windsor, not by stepping into it with a still smile, but by leading

¹ Unlike many, Morgann and Mr. Bradley do not think that Falstaff runs away on purpose, though they do think that his lying afterward is in jest. Others think that he takes the hint and turns earnest to jest in the midst of his buckram story:

Prince: Prithee let him alone: we shall have more anon.

Fal.: Dost thou hear me, Hal?

Prince: Ay, and mark thee too, Jack.

Fal.: Do so, for it is worth listening to.

The first speech is certainly an aside—by the second that is clearly indicated. If at the last speech Falstaff sees that he is detected, still he does not save his reputation or cleverness, about which the critics are concerned, for he has been tripped up repeatedly already; and the cardinal stupidity lies in the tale as a whole.

² *All's Well*, IV, i.

³ III, i. Darkness here takes the place of disguise, as mistaken identity does in the *Fourberies* where Zerbinette has her say about Géronte to his face.

the joker into it or setting one of his own. In that case the victim makes his detection of the trap quite clear to the audience in aside or soliloquy. Whenever in Elizabethan drama a character is feigning we are informed of it. That Prince Hal is playing the roysterer on purpose he himself tells us twice over,¹ but that Falstaff is playing coward, liar, or thief on purpose is intimated neither by him nor by anyone else.

That thus we read Shakespeare, not by his own light only, but also by that of his contemporaries, appears from the parallel situation in the second and third acts of the First Part of Heywood's *Fair Maid of the West*.² Attacked in the fields by Bess in the disguise of a man, the boasting and swaggering Roughman shows the white feather, but afterward boasts to her of his deeds, is led on by her simulated interest and sympathy, entangled and tripped up in his lies, and finally put to confusion when all the facts are laid bare. Like Falstaff he incurs ridicule, if not for counting noses and telling buckram from Kendal green when it is so dark that he cannot see his own hand, at least for justling with the enemy for the wall in mid-field. Like Falstaff he tells how and when he "took" the blows and "put them by." "I was never so put to it" (I never dealt better). "I think I paid him home" (seven of the eleven I paid). "Scap'd he with life?" (pray God, you have not murder'd some of them). "Ay, that's my fear: if he recover this," etc. (nay, that's past praying for). That Roughman is a coward no one can doubt, "for he himself has said it";³ and manifestly the whole point in the "reproof of his lies," as of Falstaff's, is the ignominy of cowardice. The two things are inseparable; no dramatist—no one but a metaphysician—would think of separating them, or of having a liar confuted who is lying for fun.

Falstaff's cowardice appears still more clearly when the Gadshill incident is viewed in detail. There is the testimony of the Prince, Poins, and Falstaff himself. Four times the Prince flatly calls him coward to his face.⁴ The only time Falstaff attempts to deny it—on Gadshill—the Prince replies, "Well, we leave that to the proof";

¹ Part I, I, II, 160, 218-40.

² Published in 1631; probably written before 1603.

³ *Fair Maid*, Part I, III, i, 296 (*Works*, 1874).

⁴ Part I, II, II, 69; IV, 268, 542; Part II, II, iv, 353.

and it comes speedily. Poins's estimate of his character has been subjected to the most undramatic and hair-splitting comment imaginable:¹ "Well, for two of them, I know them to be as true-bred cowards as ever turned back; and for the third, if he fight longer than he sees reason, I'll forswear arms" (I, ii, 205). Certainly the latter half of the sentence contains no praise, however faint; it is followed by the remark about "the incomprehensible lies that this same fat rogue will tell us." Here or anywhere Poins, or Shakespeare himself, is not the man to distinguish between conduct and character, principles and constitution, a coward and a courageously consistent Epicurean; and this can only be a case of understatement and irony. Falstaff himself admits that he was a coward on instinct,² and at Shrewsbury says to himself, "I fear the shot here," "I am afraid of this Percy," and makes his words good by stabbing the corpse. Against such an interpretation Morgann and his followers murmur, bidding us remember his age and his peculiar philosophy, the corrupting example of his associates, the odds against him, and the suddenness of the assault; but on the Elizabethan comic stage, or any popular stage, where of course there are no relentings toward cowardice (there being none even toward things beyond control, as cuckoldom, poverty, physical ugliness, or meanness of birth), nobody confesses to fear but a coward, a child, or a woman. All of Shakespeare's cowards, like his villains, bear their names written in their foreheads, and his true men, like Don Quixote in the eyes of Sancho, neither know nor understand what fear or dismay is.

How little Morgann regarded dramatic method and stage-craft is nowhere more evident than at this early moment in the episode:

Peto: How many be there of them?

Gadshill: Some eight or ten.

Fal.: Zounds, will they not rob us?

Prince: What, a coward, Sir John Paunch?

Fal.: Indeed, I am not John of Gaunt, etc.—II, ii.

This he finds to be hardly more of a confession³ than the Prince's own remark to Poins as they plan their trick in the second scene of Act I: "Yea, but I doubt they will be too hard for us." The latter

¹ By Morgann first, and, without the hair-splitting, by many after him, including Swinburne and Bradley.

² Part I, II, iv, 300-301.

³ P. 126.

remark is casual, being meant only to call forth Poins's comment (quoted above) on their companions' timorous natures, whereas Falstaff's speech is uttered after the limelight has been turned full upon him—the audience has been apprised of his cowardice, the business is afoot, and the booty at hand. Thus everything has been nicely calculated to give his abrupt exclamation full comic value and "bring down the house," as anybody would see but one who on principle had already blurred dramatic perspective and jumbled "values."

That Falstaff is not dissembling is still more evident from the management of the ensuing scene. Immediately after the robbery of the travelers he calls Poins and the Prince cowards, and swaggers. Now the coward charging the brave with cowardice,¹ like the coward boasting of his courage,² is a perennial situation, on the stage or off it. Parolles, Panurge, the two Jodelets of Scarron, and the cowards of the "character"-writers are examples; and in our time an audience knows as well what it means when such a charge comes from the lips of one already discredited as when a drunken man declares that he is not drunk. To clinch the business, immediately upon his words follows the ironical dramatic reversal and traditional comic situation of the robbery of the robbers,³ and the fat rogue roaring and running away. What dunce in the audience could now fail to follow the drift? And when Falstaff, with his craven crew, bursts in, sweating to death, upon Hal and Poins at the inn, he still cries out on cowards, again and again, as he drinks. Then, when he has caught his breath, come the "incomprehensible lies" of the men in buckram and Kendal green, the acting out of the combat—wards, blows, and extremities—and the swindling exhibit of battered buckler, bloodied garments, and hacked sword. And just like the coward denying his cowardice and the drunken man denying his drunkenness, he now cries, "I tell thee what, Hal, if I tell thee a lie, spit in my face, call me horse!" "Wilt thou believe me, Hal?" he says on a like

¹ Basilisco, *Soliman and Perseda* (1588), II, ii, 67–80; Parolles, *All's Well*, IV, iii, 321; *Jodelet, Maître-Valet*, I, iii and v; *Jodelet Duelliste*; Panurge, *Rabelais*, IV, chap. 24. John Earle, *Microcosmographia* (1628). The Coward: "A coward is the man that is commonly most fierce against the coward."

² All cowards in the drama boast. Cf., besides those cited above, the popular types, Capitano, Harlequin, Scaramouche. Cf. Maurice Sand, *Masques et Bouffons*, II, 258.

³ Eckhardt, *Die lustige Person*, pp. 151–52.

occasion, again much misdoubting in his bluster; "three or four bonds apiece and a seal ring of my grandfather's." We have seen him fighting, we know his "old ward" and how he "bore his point," and at these we laugh as at the "eight-penny matter" of the bonds and ring. Even if we should suspect him of saying it all for fun, on the spur of the moment, we now learn from blushing Bardolph of "his monstrous devices"—that like the cowardly Dericke of the *Famous Victories of Henry V*¹ he had persuaded them all to tickle their noses with speargrass, and to hack their swords with their daggers. As the precious coward Parolles, who thinks also of cutting his garments and breaking his Spanish sword, plans to do, he had given himself some hurts, though "slight" ones, and now swears he had "got them in exploit."² Here are all the conventional and traditional tricks of cowardice,³ and on the exposure of cowardice the comic effect of the scene depends as much as on the reproof of the lies.

Ah! je veux charger ce maistre fanfaron:
On ne peut l'estre tant, et n'estre pas poltron.

Just there is the point of twitting him with his boasting lies and excuses; but twice in the scene the Prince calls him coward into the bargain, and casts it up to him that he "hacked his sword and then said it was in fight."⁴ "What a slave art thou!" Hal says truly.

Nor by his shifts and evasions, "I knew ye" and "instinct," does he come off safe and sound. Throughout the rest of the scene and even in Part II he is twitted with them.⁵ "No more of that, Hal," he cries, "an thou lovest me"; and that is not the tone of triumph. Even in the midst of this scene his cowardice breaks out spontaneously anew. "Zounds," cries Poins, "an ye call me coward, I'll stab thee." And the fat man sidles off, comically enough

¹ 1585-88. As is well known, Shakespeare was acquainted with the play, and drew from it the traits of Falstaff's cowardice, thievishness, and loose living, the touches of repentance and sanctimoniousness, and his friendship with Hal.

² See *All's Well*, IV, i, for all these details; cf. Pistol, *Henry V*, V, i, 93-94:
And patches will I get unto these cudgell'd scars,
And swear I got them in the Gallia wars.

³ Aside from the other instances cited, there is that in Theophrastus, *Characters*, cap. XXV, iii, where the coward "smears himself with another's blood to show," etc.

⁴ II, iv, 288: "Coward": lines 268, 542.

⁵ II, iv, 332-35.

giving the words just on his lips the lie: "I call thee coward! I'll see thee damned ere I call thee coward,"¹ etc. Just so he falters and his bluster rings loud but hollow when in Part II the Servant of the Chief-Judge begs leave to tell him that he lies in his throat. "I give thee leave to tell me so! If thou gettest any leave of me, hang me!"²

Through the rest of the play his cowardice is, as Morgann drolly confesses, still "thrust forward and pressed upon our notice."³ Shakespeare will have him a coward if Morgann won't. When he hears the news of the uprising he ingenuously asks the Prince whether he is not horribly afraid, and in reply is told that the Prince lacks some of his instinct. When ordered off to the North he wishes this tavern were his drum; and on the eve of the fray he whimpers, "I would 'twere bed-time, Hal, and all well,"⁴ and then says his catechism of dishonor. Standing by as Hal and Hotspur come together, he proves to be as good at encouraging others to fight as the white-livered Moron and Panurge.⁵ Then he falls flat and feigns death like clowns and cowards in the hour of danger, not in England only but in contemporary Germany, Spain, and Italy,⁶ and above all sets the seal on his cowardice by the dastardly blow and by hatching the scheme to take the honor of killing Hotspur to himself. "I'll swear I killed him," he says, "nothing confutes me but eyes and nobody sees me"; and could anything more effectively contradict the opinion that he "stood on the ground

¹ II, iv, 160.

² Part II, I, ii, 99; cf. II, iv, 344.

³ Pp. 3, 47.

⁴ "This articulated wish is not the fearful outcry of a coward, but the frank and honest breathing of a generous fellow, who does not expect to be seriously reproached with the character" (Morgann, p. 83). Even in our day, on the stage or off it, a character of Falstaff's reputation would not risk the confession with impunity. How much less in more rough-and-ready times!

⁵ *Princesse d'Elide*, I, iii, where, perched in a tree, Moron urges on the archers to kill the bear; and Rabelais, II, chap. 29, where Panurge cheers on his master.

⁶ *Locrine* (1586), II, vi; Strumbo; Beolco (Ruzzante), First Dialogue; see Creizenach, IV, 340, for both; Cicognini, *Costituto di Pietra* (published before 1650), sc. 7, where Passarino falls flat to save himself, though not by feigning death; Calderon, *Principe Constante*, I, xiv, Brito, the gracioso; and for this "business" in contemporary Germany cf. Creizenach, *Englische Comödianten*, p. cv. In *Hase with You to Saffron Walden* (1596), moreover, Nash, referring to an epigram of Campion's on Barnabe Barnes, and much exaggerating the tenor of the text, remarks: "He shewes how hee bragd when he was in France he sue ten men, when (fearefull cowbabie [coward]) he never heard peice shot off but he fell flat on his face." And in the character of the "coward" Nicholas Breton (*The Goode and the Badde*, 1616) says that he "falls flat on his face when he hears the cannon."

of natural courage only and common sense, and renounced that grinning idol of military zealots, honor,"¹ than his undertaking, like the pitiful poltroons, Pistol, Parolles, and Bessus,² to filch "bright honor," which the man fallen at his feet had boldly plucked? Such wreaking of one's self on a dead body, moreover, is, like his "playing possum," one of the established *lazzi* of the coward on the stage. Moron beats the bear once it is dead; the Franc Archier de Baignollet (c. 1480) beats the scarecrow once he recognizes it as such, and in Shakespeare's time clowns played pranks on corpses both in England and in Germany.³ Here in the battle, then, is a little heap of situations, *lazzi*, or bits of business, all stamped as those of a coward, not only intrinsically, but by immemorial custom; and it is difficult to see how Shakespeare could have effaced that impression even had he tried.

In the Second Part the "satyr, lecher, and parasite" in Falstaff are uppermost, and the captain rests on his laurels. But we all know how they were won, and cannot take to heart his reputation for valor with certain ladies of Eastcheap, Justice Shallow, or even the enemy at Shrewsbury and at Gaultree Forest. The effect of Dame Quickly's and Doll Tearsheet's praise of his prowess in stabbing and foining would be inconsiderable even if, with most of the English critics, including Professor Bradley himself,⁴ we failed to detect the palpable double entendre.⁵ And what a witness is

¹ Morgann, p. 103.

² Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King*. He declares to the audience that he will swear that the knife in his hand is all that is left of the sword which he had vowed to make his enemy eat. For Pistol and Parolles see above, p. 75.

³ *Princesse d'Elide*, Interm.; Recueil Picot et Nyrop, line 355. Their motives, of course, are different, for Falstaff's is his fear that Hotspur may come to life and his craving for the honor and profit of killing him; cf. Creizenach, *Englische Comödianten*, p. cv; *Romeo and Juliet*, III, i, 145 (Creizenach). In *Soliman and Perseda* Piston robs a corpse (II, i).

⁴ *Oxford Lectures*, p. 266.

⁵ Part II, II, i, 15; II, iv, 252. For the former cf. Schmidt's *Lexicon* under *stab*, and *Julius Caesar*, I, ii, 277. As for the second reference, *join* must be used with the meaning evident in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Loyal Subject*, I, iv; *Thierry and Theodore*, II, iii. So Part II, II, i, 21-22, *thrust*; cf. the frequent instances of *double entendre* in the words *pike*, *lance*, *target*, etc. Their equivalents are to be found contemporaneously in foreign languages, as Italian; for such jokes are international. And the obscene joke so certain in *stab*, *join*, and *thrust*, which immediately precede and follow Quickly's remark that "a' cares not what mischief he does if his weapon be out" (I, 16), casts grave suspicion even on its simplicity and honesty of purpose, though not in Mr. Bradley's eyes (*ibid.*).

Shallow, whose "every third word is a lie," whose every word is ludicrous! Well might Falstaff break Skogan's head ("some boisterous fencer," thinks Morgann, but really Court Fool) on that day in the calendar when Shallow himself fought Sampson Stockfish, fruiterer!¹ That was a day that ended "without the perdition of souls." And a ballad, as Falstaff says, not sober history, is the place for his capture of Colville and drubbing of Pistol. The Ancient ran from him like quicksilver; and Colville surrendered "more of his courtesy," says Lancaster, "than your deserving." Our knight's reputation for valor had been as lightly won as that of Bessus, though he has not Bessus' reason to lament it.² Obviously Lancaster and the audience know more about that and his character, too, than Colville, and if Shakespeare had had any notion of redeeming him in our eyes, he would not have had his "pure and immaculate valor" snubbed by his chief.

The famous soliloquy which follows, on sack as the cause of all wit and valor, is the epilogue to the old reveller's military career and an epitome of his character. It is an old saw and familiar fact that wine makes cowards brave,³ and Falstaff speaks out (though behind his hand) when he says that men are but fools and cowards without it.

After this running comment on the two Parts of *Henry IV* we might, if it were necessary, further strengthen the case against Falstaff's courage by considering how Shakespeare's character continues and develops⁴ the dramatic and legendary tradition concerning Sir John Fastolf, or Falstaff,⁵ and Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham. As is well known our knight bore the name Oldcastle in the original draft of Part I, like the cowardly, thievish loose-liver

¹ For the coward fighting a coward, see below, p. 83. Stockfish was "haddock or hake beaten with clubbes or stockes," and a fruiterer was at least as tame as a tailor.

² *A King and No King*, III, ii. Like Falstaff's it is not of his earning, and it embarrasses him with challenges. Falstaff indeed complains of his name being terrible to the enemy, but there he is frankly joking.

³ Somerville, *The Wife*, I, 27. It is a notion found in popular lore, as in the story of the mouse which, after drinking spilt brandy, cries, "Now bring on that cat!" On the stage, Lady Macbeth confesses that she has drunk wine to stiffen her nerves; and the heroine in *La Tosca* actually drinks it.

⁴ For this see W. Baeske, *Oldcastle-Falstaff bis Shakespeare*.

⁵ In plays at least the name is spelled both ways. See J. Gairdner, *Studies in English History*, pp. 64-65.

in the *Famous Victories*. These traits as well as the rags and tatters of piety which both have about them are taken from the Lollard as traduced in monkish chronicle and popular song. And when, at the complaint of the contemporary Lord Cobham, Shakespeare was moved to make amends to the martyr in the epilogue to Part II, and change the name to Falstaff in the text, he dropped one coward of popular and dramatic tradition only to take up another. In the *First Part of Henry VI*, Act III, scene ii, Sir John Fastolf, who in fact lost a battle in France, runs ignominiously away to "save himself." In real life both Sir Johns were brave and worthy fellows;¹ they are thus overwhelmed with obloquy because in the popular imagination one charge, as this of heresy² or that of cowardice, brings every other in its trail;³ but all that concerns us here is that in Shakespeare they are cowards because they were that before. Our poet always stands by public opinion, and his English kings or Roman heroes are to him what they were to his age. Even to the dramatist of our day, as Mr. Archer observes, "a hero must be (more or less) a hero, a villain (more or less) a villain, if accepted tradition so decrees it Fawkes must not be made an earnest Presbyterian, Nell Gwynn a model of chastity, or William the Silent a chatterbox." *Sit Medea ferox invictaque, flebilis Ino.*

I have suggested that many of the "secret impressions of courage" are contradictions inherent in the type of the braggart captain. For to this type Falstaff unquestionably belongs. He has the increasing belly and decreasing leg,⁴ the diminutive page for a foil, the weapon (his pistol) that is no weapon, but a fraud,⁵ as well as

¹ For Falstaff previous to Shakespeare see Gairdner, the *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oldcastle and Fastolf), and Baeske.

² As has been remarked, I think, by others, the Lollard Oldcastle as buffoon is a parallel to the "Christian" as a stock comic figure in the late Greek mimus.

³ See below, p. 80.

⁴ Part II, I, II, 204.

⁵ Aristophanes' Kleonimus is of enormous size; Pyrgopolinices has long spindling legs, and most of the braggart soldiers have these, or a big paunch, or, like the Maccus of the atelians and sometimes Polichinelle, both the one and the other. Like the two latter characters and the English Punch, strange to say, Falstaff, in Morgann's time and perhaps earlier, was represented with a hump behind as well as before; for (p. 26) he recalls with horror the "round tortoise-back," produced by "I know not what stuffing or contrivance." Sancho Panza begins as a *miles*, for (I, chap. 9) he has a big belly, short figure, and long legs, though afterward we hear no more of them. For the weapon see below. Their courage being called in question, as is the case with the above characters and with Falstaff and Sir Topias, it is in the spirit of ancient and Renaissance comic art, which delighted in physical contrasts, that their size of itself should almost be sufficient

most of the inner qualities of this ancient stage-figure—cowardice and outlandish bragging, gluttony and lechery, sycophancy and pride. Also he is a recruiting officer and (though in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*) a suitor gulled.¹ All these traits are manifest, except his sycophancy, which appears in his dependence on the Prince and his cajoling ways with him; and except his pride, which appears in his insistence on his title on every occasion,² and in his reputation for a proud jack among the drawers.³ Llyl's Sir Tophas, Jonson's Bobadill and Tucca, Beaumont's Bessus, Chapman's Braggadino and Quintiliano,⁴ Ralph Roister Doister, Ambidexter, and Thersites, as well as Shakespeare's Pistol, Don Armado, and Parolles, have most or many of these traits; and these descend to them, if not from the classics directly, from the Italian popular *miles*, Capitano Spavento.⁵ The English and Italian specimens differ from those of Plautus in that they are impecunious, the unwelcome parasites of tailor, barber, or landlady, not the patrons of parasites. Falstaff is both the one and the other.⁶ Unlike most braggart captains, however, he is not silly and affected—those qualities were reserved for Pistol—but is a jester and a wit. It is this circumstance no doubt that has made critics, even of late, declare that the impression of his character is quite different, and is therefore not that of a coward. But all the other traits save paunch and spindle-shanks are also the traits of famous clowns—Panurge, Sosie, Folengo's Cingar, Scarron's Jodelet—and even now a clown not a coward is a rarity on the stage. In that day of unanalytical but prodigally copious characterization, whereby on the stage, or, as in the case of Machiavelli, Luther, or Oldeastle himself, in popular tradition, a

to substantiate the charge. "When did you see a black beard with a white liver," says Heywood, "or a little fellow without a tall stomach?"

Capitano Spavento has a *paggio*; Ralph Roister Doister, Dobinet Doughtie; Sir Tophas, Epiton; Don Armado, Moth. (Reich.). Generally, like Falstaff's, the page is pert and impudent.

¹ Both features are in Pyrgopolinices.

² Part II, II, ii, 118.

³ Part I, II, iv, 11.

⁴ See Creizenach, IV, 350. For some details of the type I am indebted also to H. Graf, *Miles Gloriosus* (Rostock dissertation, 1892).

⁵ Other names: Spezzafer, Fracasso, Matamoros, Spezza-Monti, Giangurgolo, Vappo, Rogantino, etc.; Sand.

⁶ He has his landlady and tailor; has his gull Shallow as Quintiliano has his Innocentio and Giovanelli, and Bobadill has his Matthew; and yet he keeps Bardolph and perhaps Peto and Nym.

villain engrosses all criminal traits and a professional comic character all vicious ones,¹ Falstaff (as clown) already a cheat, a liar, a boaster, a glutton, a lecher, and a thief, could hardly help being a coward as well.

Much has been said about Falstaff being done from the life—even with George Peele or Henry Chettle for a model—but except in tone or in tricks of manner it is now evident that this could not be. The whole man or the tithe of him never trod the earth. Much, too, has been said of the Capitano and the Matamore arising out of intestine turmoil in Italy and the Spanish invasion, of the *miles gloriosus* arising out of the Roman wars in Asia and Africa, and of the Alazon out of the Alexandrian conquests. Something similar has been said of the *servus fallax* of Roman comedy, but Sellar's remark fits not only this case but the others. "Though a wonderful conception of the humorous imagination, it is a character hardly compatible with any social conditions."² Nothing is so rare as realism—nothing in itself so hateful to the public or by name so dear. The braggart captains, the valets who beat and bamboozle their masters, the nurses and chambermaids who scold them and thwart them in every wish, the women who put their husbands in bodily fear, and the timid and pure-minded maidens who upon provocation make love, and in men's clothing seek the beloved through field and forest in lands remote,³—all please only by their rarity or unreality, being incompatible with conditions under which women and servants knew no liberty, and a soldier stood or fell by his personal prowess alone. He sees deeper who finds that the marvelous exploits

¹ See below, p. 104. Jodelet has been called: "insolent, lubrique, hableur, et pardessus tout poitron." Of the vices of Panurge Rabelais (II, chap. 16) gives a famous catalogue, including lewdness, cozening, drinking, roistering, and thieving, but forgetting the rest of them—boasting, cruelty, and cowardice. Cingar and Pulci's Margutte have a still more formidable array of merry sins. And the same lavish style appears in other characters of the old Italian popular comedy than the Capitano, as the Bucco of the atellans, who was "suffisant, flatteur, fanfaron, voleur, lâche"; and Pulcinella, who besides these qualities inherits those of the Maccus, "vif, spirituel, un peu féroce" (Sand, I, 126). Compare in the sixteenth century the popular mythopoetic characterization of Machiavelli among the northern nations, especially in the drama, and of Luther among the southern.

² *Poets of the Republic* (Oxford, 1889), p. 170.

³ Those acquainted with the criticism of Shakespeare and Molière will remember that both a free-spoken soubrette, Toliette or Dorine, and Rosalind, with her gallant curtailed upon her thigh, have been thought representative of their times. Yet for a century before in the *novelle* and comedies of Italy and Spain, where maidens were guarded jealously, they, too, go seeking their lovers in male attire.

of Alexander provoked a boasting spirit of irony and satire in the Athenian public and playwrights.¹ Hence—directly out of the humorous imagination—these creations so extravagant and improbable.

The braggart captain, indeed, is incompatible with himself. Cowards do not go to war, or, if driven to it, do not become captains. Or if even that is not beyond the compass of chance and their own contriving, the clever ones do not boast so extravagantly as to rob themselves of credence and engage themselves in undertakings which it is farthest from their wish to fulfil. The huge and delectable contrasts of the old comedy involve contradictions as huge, and the spectators blinked fact—if indeed they were not blind to it—in the throes of their laughter. After Gadshill a fellow so clever would neither have let his lies grow on his hands nor—except on the defensive—have undertaken to lie at all. But how tame for an Elizabethan, to whom what is “gross, open, palpable” was a delight! Bulthaupt seriously wonders why Falstaff went to war, and concludes that he went exalted through his humor above all fear,² and as we have seen, Morgann (and many a critic since) has thought it fine and brave of him, and has dwelt fondly on the Prince’s preference of him to others for a charge of foot, on a dozen³ bareheaded sweating captains knocking at taverns and asking everyone for Sir John Falstaff, or on Falstaff’s leading⁴ his men where they are peppered. He might as well wonder why a monster of a miser like Harpagon keeps a coach and horses, a cook and a troop of servants, and conclude that he must be generous and open-handed after all. It is on the stage—it is in a comedy—and he keeps his servants to stint them, and the horses to get up nights and steal away their oats.⁵ And Falstaff goes to the wars to say his catechism, brandish a bottle for a pistol, fall dead, joke, cheat, and

¹ O. Ribbeck, *Alason*, pp. 32–34.

² *Dramaturgie*, II, 74. He has reached a state of philosophic calm. “Er scheint seiner selbst so sicher dass er seine Ruhe oder die Freiheit seiner Seele auch in der kritischsten Lage nicht zu verlieren fürchtet.” Bradley speaks of his having “risen superior to all serious motives.”

³ A ballad-like exaggeration such as Shakespeare indulges himself in when it costs the company nothing. Like Capulet’s “twenty cunning cooks” they “stay at door”—do not tread the stage.

⁴ Mr. Bradley comments on the fact that it is “led” not “sent.”

⁵ A point made by Sarcey.

lie. In that day of prodigious contrasts and unchartered mirth a coward who does not rob on the highway or follow the wars—is no coward. To impute it to Falstaff's courage that he is in demand on the eve of war and goes to war without murmuring would mean that we must do the like to Parolles, who yearns for the wars in Italy and persuades his master to take him there; and to those "true-bred cowards" Ancient Pistol, Lieutenant Bardolph, and Corporal Nym, who, in the later play, follow the heroic young king into France. Falstaff goes to war to furnish matter for comedy, the Prince gives him a charge to get him to the war, and the dozen captains come sweating to fetch the laggard to his charge.¹

Two situations in which Falstaff is placed are connected with the *miles gloriosus* traditionally. The coward taking a captive is an incongruous and mirth-provoking situation which Shakespeare repeats in *Henry V* when Pistol, who, according to the Boy, has not a tenth of even Nym's or Bardolph's valor, captures Monsieur le Fer; and it appears before that in the fine old French farce of *Colin, fils de Thenot le Maire*, where the hero, boasting of a prisoner, is afraid to fetch him in because of his iron-bound staff, though he turns out to be a German pilgrim, not a Turk. Even so, Colin, like Falstaff and Pistol, might well "thank thee for thee." In all of these instances, moreover, there must have been much comic "business" furnished by the actors to remind us that the captor is a coward.² It is unthinkable that Pistol with his Frenchman should have been no funnier at the Globe than he is in the text.³

The other situation is that of the soldier who keeps his appetite,

¹ It matters not that the charge was given in Part I and that he was fetched in Part II. The situation is quite the same—on the eve of departure to the war.

² Morgann denies that Falstaff roared as he ran away because there is no stage direction, though the roaring is remarked upon by both Poins and the Prince. He might have supplied it. See Creizenach, *Englische Comödianten*, p. xcvi, for evidence, if that were necessary, that stage directions as we have them are very incomplete. So they are in printed plays today, and vastly they diminish in quantity as we go back through three centuries. At this point we should recall Viola pitted against Aguecheck as we have seen them on the stage, or the more explicit text of *L'Avantureux* (1521). "Ils reculent toujours pour prendre du champs et crient: À mort! à mort!" Cf. *Henry V*, II, i, Nym and Pistol. Colville, of course, is no coward, but is comically mistaken.

³ The more general situation of the coward fighting the coward, or a woman, is common with the type: Falstaff fights Pistol and has a row with Quickly and her constables; Roister Dolster is beaten by women; Thersites and Ambidexter fight with these and with snails and butterflies; and Giangurgolo, the Calabrian, gets into a rage with poor innocent people and fights with eunuchs (Sand, I, 202). Cf. Graf, p. 35.

though scared. Another contradiction, though to the ancients and the men of the Renaissance it betokened not coolness and presence of mind but a base and besotted nature, dead to name and fame.¹ Falstaff sleeps and snores while the watch seek for him and has his bottle on the field, just as Sosie, after he has run and hidden in the tent, drinks wine and eats ham.² And the putting of a bottle in his case for a pistol is a stranger contradiction still. According to our notions a coward would go armed to the teeth,³ but earlier art is prone to ignore analysis and present character in an outward and typical way.⁴ Time and again in Renaissance drama the coward finds his sword rusted in,⁵ or, drawing it, can show but the half of a blade, or, like Basilisco, a painted lath. Capitano had a spider's web around his sheath, and Harlequin, like the Greek beardless satyr,⁶ Pulcinella, at times,⁷ and the English Vice, wore as the symbol of his cowardice a wooden sword, not out of keeping with the rabbit scut⁸ in his hat. M. Jusserand has remarked upon the use of signs and symbols in mediaeval drama and painting—God on the stage in the habiliments of pope or bishop, and St. Stephen painted with a stone, not on his crown, but in his hand, St. Lawrence toying with his gridiron, or Samson being shorn in the lap of Delilah with the ass's jawbone still in his hand! Even in Goldoni's *Locandiera* the chicken-hearted Marchese's sword is rusted in, and when out is no

¹ In "contempt of glory," says Hazlitt (ed. 1864, p. 190), determined, as always, to make him superior to circumstances. Cf. his suggestion that Falstaff may have put the tavern-reckoning in his pocket "as a trick." And when he falls asleep, I suppose, he is feigning once more. On the contrary, his falling asleep may be no more than a device of the dramatist's to get his pocket picked without his knowing it.

² *Amphytrion*, I, ii. In Falstaff's case the wine may be there to bolster him up, or only to cool his thirst on a hot day. Cf. Part II, I, ii, 235.

³ Sometimes, indeed, the Matamore was so represented. Cf. Sand, I, 197. This later realism appears in *L'Asautreux*, and in *Jodelot Duelliste* when the coward takes all unfair precautions by securing the most formidable weapons and wearing concealed a cuirass and a steel cap (II, vii). Falstaff himself seems to appreciate the uses of a sword when he refuses to lend his to Hal, though this, again, may be no more than a device of the dramatist's to introduce the practical joke of the pistol.

⁴ Cf. the delight in discordant sounds attributed to the Malcontents Malevole and Jaques.

⁵ T. Jordan, *Pictures of Passions* (1641), *A Plundering Coward*: "A heavy iron sword, which fondly grows to the kinde scabbard." Cf. Middleton's *Witch*, v. i. The coward Aberganes cannot draw, and does "not care to see it—'tis only a holiday thing to wear at a man's side."

⁶ *Grande Encyclopaedia*, s.v. "Arlequin."

⁷ Sand, I, 132.

⁸ Sand, I, 68.

more than a stump; and in this case, as in the others, the point is not that the character is afraid of cold steel, or "naked weapons," but that his martial profession is a burlesque and fraud. In the *miles* it is a touch in sympathy and keeping with the whole extravagant and external scheme.

Further consideration of Falstaff's cowardice depends on the "incomprehensible lies" of the buckram story and the problems which they involve. By most English critics they are thought to be no lies but mere "waggery" to amuse himself or the Prince;¹ by some Germans they are considered to be a case of unconscious exaggeration.² No one, so far as I know,³ has suggested that Falstaff undertakes to deceive, and yet without intending a jest falls into the preposterous exaggerations and contradictions of a sailor or fisherman spinning a yarn. Still a scamp, he is no longer a wit. As for the intention to deceive, that in the light of what we have already said about the Elizabethan practical joke should, to any student of the period, be apparent. Poins's prediction is fulfilled to the letter—"how thirty at least he fought with; what wards, what blows, what extremities he endured"—and is further confirmed by the purposed fraud of his "monstrous devices." And as for the unconscious exaggerations and contradictions, he is like the Playboy of the Western World, who at first says that he riz the loy and let fall the edge on his father's skull; later says that he halved his skull; then that he split him to the knob of his gullet; then that with one blow he cleft him to the breeches belt.⁴ Only, in Christy Mahon's case, the intervals between these exaggerations are so wide, the motivation provided in them by the admiration of his hearers and his own waxing enthusiasm so subtle and complete, that his reputation for

¹ Morgann, Hazlitt, Lloyd, Maginn, Wetz (p. 406), Bradley (p. 264), Professor Matthews (p. 129), though it does not seem like him.

² Wolff, I, 426; but like most of the Germans he refuses to entertain the notion that Falstaff also meant to deceive. Bulthaupt (II, 72-73), troubled with the inconsistency of the character, seems to take the middle course of having Falstaff half in earnest, half in jest.

³ Gervinus (Lon., 1863, i, pp. 452, 453) and Wolff (I, 425) seem to approach it, but probably mean no more than "witty myself and the cause that wit is in other men" (Part II, I, ii, 11). And by that Falstaff means only that he furnishes others matter for mirth by his personal appearance.

⁴ Such a comparison is not illegitimate. Synge abounds in old farcical material, dating back to the fabliaux, though, as here, treated with modern delicacy.

intelligence hardly suffers. Falstaff piles up his exaggerations pell-mell, despite the interrupting jeers of the Prince and Poins, and turns at once from wit to butt.

Here lies an incongruity¹ greater than any we have met, and to understand it we must look about us, as the commentator does when he is puzzled by a phrase of the text in contemporary drama. The situation is the same as that in Heywood's *Fair Maid* cited above. The only difference is that between great art and small; for in the same period a great popular artist and a mediocre one use the same means of expression—"business," situations, and types. That is to say, the difference is in the touch. In both cases before us there is the cowardly action deliberately misrepresented in the report by means of gross exaggerations and contradictions,² satirically noticed by the hearer but without effect upon the speaker. Roughman is not witty, to be sure, nor, once started, does he let his numbers grow. But, like Falstaff not a fool, he too makes a fool of himself with his story.

That Falstaff the wit should thus turn into a butt involves a lack of unity and consistency in the portrayal which in higher art is nowadays impossible but was then not rare. He was the comic character—men asked no more. Contradictions enough we have found already in the *miles*. According to Reich,³ moreover, the Hindoo *Vidusaka*, the Roman *scurra*, and the Greek *γελωτοποιός* were often not only wits who jested at others' and their own expense, but like the court fool were the butts of others' jokes, practical and verbal. And the same may be said of the Elizabethan stage fools and clowns.⁴ With some of his Shakespeare goes as far as with Falstaff, though turning the character not so much into a butt as into a buffoon.

Launce, for instance, is quick and expert at jest and repartee, punning and word-splitting, gets the better of Speed and others who

¹ Bulthaupt has felt it, and stated it more clearly and fully than anyone else, but he undertakes no explanation.—*Dramaturgie*, II, 72–73.

² Morgan (p. 138) makes much of the circumstance that Falstaff's braggadocios are after the fact, not before it. But this is the case with a number of cowards. Ruzzante in Beolco's First Dialogue, getting up from the ground, brags about what he would have done if his rival had been there alone instead of "one of a hundred"; Swash, in Day's *Blind Beggar of Bednall Green*, echoing Falstaff, declares, "I very manfully killed seven of the six," though the rest carried away the money; Robin in Adam de la Halle's *Jeu de Robin et Marion; Protaldy in Thierry and Theodore*, II, iv.

³ *Mimus*, pp. 24, 736, 866, etc.

⁴ Eckhardt, p. 255.

are pitted against him, and sees through his master's perfidy when others fail. Yet at times he confounds¹ words in the style of Malaprop and Partington, "misplaces" and talks contradictory nonsense like the Shakespearean constables,² craftily withholds information one moment and unconsciously blabs it out the next,³ and, like Sosie,⁴ when he undertakes to tell of his parting with dramatic directness and exactitude gets his tale hopelessly tangled and muddled. Similarly in *Measure for Measure* Pompey Bum has to his credit some of the shrewdest sayings in the play,⁵ and yet confuses words like *respect* and *suspect*, *suppose* and *depose*, *instant* and *distant*, and, like Dogberry, wanders and flounders in his story of Mistress Elbow and Master Froth without the wit to suspect it. "Why very well," he cries delighted, "I hope here be truths!" These and other clowns Professor Eckhardt, also bent upon unity, has been under the necessity of interpreting as stupid intentionally, laughing, like the canonical Falstaff, in their sleeves.⁶ Of this there are instances, no doubt; but on the Elizabethan stage, as we have seen, feigning is, as it begins, explicitly indicated, or else is manifest from the situation and the sudden change of tone; and without such warrant it seems unscientific to have recourse to this method of obviating a contradiction or harmonizing a discord.⁷ As Professor Eckhardt himself has remarked and perhaps everybody has noticed, in many Elizabethan plays all the comic characters are witty, and of those classes into which Professor Eckhardt has ranged all the professional clowns and jesters of Elizabethan drama, by far the largest are those who are only "prevailingly" wits and jesters and those who are only "prevailingly" clowns and dolts. As in Harlequin⁸ and the "patch" in the circus-ring, wit mixed with stupidity is the quicker to tickle the public taste. Nor does the one blend with or leaven the other. Launce and Pompey are both wits and clowns.

¹ *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II, III, 4, etc.

² II, III, 11 and 13 (cf. *Measure for Measure*, II, I, 90). Cf. Elbow, Dogberry, Verges, Dull.

³ III, I, 265.

⁴ *Amphytrion*, I, I.

⁵ I, II; II, I, 234 ff.

⁶ Eckhardt, pp. 255, 411. From this exhaustive work most of the facts used in this paragraph are derived.

⁷ Cf. below, another instance—and another method—with Polonius.

⁸ "Un mélange d'ignorance, de naïveté, d'esprit, de bêtise, et de grâce" (Sand, I, 75).

Such is Falstaff; nor is this *naïveté* missing at other times, as in his remorse. In the first scene in which he appears Falstaff falters in his jollity and vows that he will give over this life, being now little better than one of the wicked. "Where shall we take a purse tomorrow, Jack?" "Zounds!" he shouts, "where thou wilt, lad!" On a blue Monday at the Boar's Head he is for repenting once more as he moodily contemplates his wasting figure. Bardolph complains of his fretfulness. "Why, *there* is it. Come sing me a bawdy song; make me merry!" If in this he be self-conscious, how annoying and unnatural! Those numerous critics who to keep for Falstaff his reputation as a humorist have him here play a part, seem to do so at the expense of their own. It is not to be wondered at in Hegel and some few German critics¹ that, with philosophy in their every thought, they should shake their heads at the unenlightenment of Aristophanes, and turning their backs on Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Molière should proclaim the highest species of humor to be intentional and conscious; but it is to be wondered at in Englishmen. What joke could be made of this equal to the unconscious comical effect of the old sensualist plunged in penitence, and spontaneously buoyed up again, as by a specific levity? "Peace, good Doll"—and here, too, he is not jesting but saying it with a shudder—"do not speak like a death's head; do not bid me remember mine end." The pith of the humor lies in the huge appetite for purses, or mirth, bursting in an instant the bonds of his penitence; just as it lies in his thirst swallowing up the memory that his lips are not yet dry. "Give me a cup of sack! I am a rogue if I drunk to-day!"² He is as unconscious as inconsistency has been on the comic stage ever since—as Molière's philosopher who declaims against wrath and presently gives way to it, or the duennas of Steele and Sheridan, who deprecate love and marriage for their nieces at the moment when they seek it for themselves.

Naïve, then, as well as witty, and quite as much the cause of mirth in other men when he is least aware, Falstaff is less "incomprehensible."

¹ Ulrich, etc., but not Gervinus; cf. Wetz, pp. 402–3; Hegel (cited by Wetz), *Asthetik*, III, 576.

² Such instances Wetz (p. 406), under the influence of Lloyd, considers intentional jokes, despite his insistence on Falstaff's *naïveté*. Bradley and other English critics agree.

sible" both in his lies and, as we shall presently see, in his conduct generally. His wit is expended, not in making himself ridiculous for the sake of a joke unshared and unuttered, but, by hook or by crook, in avoiding that. Dryden long ago remarked as his special accomplishments his shifts and quick evasions; and Jonson, his "easy scapes and sallies of levity." "His wit lies in those things he says *praeter expectatum*, unexpected by the audience; his quick evasions when you imagine him surprised, which, as they are extremely diverting of themselves, so receive a great addition from his person."¹ Morgann, Lloyd,² Maginn,³ and even Mr. Bradley⁴ find this all too simple, and, wrenching both plot⁵ and character in the process, have him lie in no expectation of being believed, step into traps for the fun of wriggling out, and bid for gibes at his own expense. Losing is as good as winning, and Falstaff is out for exercise and his health! But from Aristophanes and Plautus down through the Renaissance to the present-day Eloquent Dempsey of Mr. William Boyle there is a continual succession of characters who are well content to use their wits as they may to keep from smarting for their follies. Particularly is this the case with cowards and braggarts, with Panurge,⁶ Capitano Spavento, and the various Elizabethan specimens of the Captain—

¹ *Dramatic Possey*, p. 43.

² *Essays* (1875), p. 223; as when he says "When thou wilt, lad," etc., or "I'm a rogue," etc.

³ P. 51: "It was no matter whether he invented what tended to laughter or whether it was invented upon him." It is true that he is not resentful or sulky, but what clown is?

⁴ *Oxford Lectures*, pp. 264-65. In treating Falstaff's mendacity Mr. Bradley fails to observe distinctions which, as it seems to me, are required by the exigencies of dramatic technique and which then would have been observed by an audience instinctively. Falstaff's braggadocio and his vowing himself a rogue if he had drunk today, are, though lies, very different in spirit and purpose from the shifts and evasions by which, like Aristotle below, he turns all to merriment and half saves the day. Still another sort of lie is that which serves no practical purpose—offends no idealistic scruples—his jest about his corpulence being due to sighing and grief and his voice being cracked by singing of anthems. But Mr. Bradley rhetorically asks those who think that Falstaff expected to be believed in his buckram story whether he expected to be believed in these other cases as well. To make Falstaff, if a whole-hearted liar in one case, a whole-hearted liar in all, is like making Iago a liar even in soliloquy.

"I suppose they consider that Falstaff was in earnest," he continues, "when, wanting to get twenty-two yards of satin on trust, he offered Bardolph as security." That is not a lie at all—is a case in no sense parallel to the others; but certainly he was as much in earnest as when he cheated Quickly and Shallow. He afterward makes it plain that he had expected to get the satin (Part II, I, ii, 48-50). "Or even when he sold his soul on Good Friday to the devil for a cup of Madeira and a cold capon's leg." And that Falstaff never says, but the jeering and jesting Poins.

⁵ See below, p. 90.

⁶ Book IV, chap. 67, where he blames for his condition the famous cat Rodillardus.

Parolles,¹ Bobadill, Bessus, Braggadino, and Sir Tophas. After saving their bacon their dearest desire is to save their face. Even those romancing liars whose cowardice is not in grain, Peer Gynt and Christy Mahon, are far from courting failure and discredit.

Some of the most famous of Falstaff's shifts are in other plays actually duplicated. In *Look about You*, printed in 1600, Fauconbridge, having in ignorance of her presence spoken slightlying of his wife, avails himself of the evasion to which, when it is suggested, Falstaff scorns to resort for a second time, having still another at hand:

*I knew thee, Moll; now by my sword I knew thee;
I winked at all; I laughed at every jest.—Sc. 28.*

And like Falstaff he is laughed at for it more than his jest. In Middleton's *Family of Love* it is the woman that is caught, and she knew thee as well as the child knows his own father—"I knew him to be my husband even by very instinct." So in Cicognini's *Don Juan*, Passarino, still more cowardly than his equivalent Leporello or Sganarelle, when surprised in a soliloquy far from loyal to his master, cries in panic, "Faith, I saw you coming and I was only joking."² Beaumont's Lessus, again, when taken to task declares that "Bessus the coward wronged you, and shall Bessus the valiant maintain what Bessus the coward did?" And to a man who beats him he confesses that he "shall think him a valiant fellow for all this." For the three English sayings this is the model:

Why thou knowest I am as valiant as Hercules; but beware instinct; the lion will not touch the true prince. Instinct is a great matter; I was now a coward on instinct. I shall think the better of myself and thee during my life: I for a valiant lion, and thou for a true prince.

Thus before or after him, some of Falstaff's shifts, like his "monstrous devices" and his *lazzi* on the battlefield, were the recognized property of a double-dealer and poltroon.

If Falstaff steps into the trap on purpose and is, as Mr. Bradley says, aware that his slanders upon the Prince will be repeated to him, and, as most Englishmen say, went to Gadshill only for a lark, and, as Lloyd and Maginn suspect, actually knew the Prince and Poins,

¹ *All's Well*, I, i, 215, and see above.

² *Il Consilato di Pietra*, sc. 28: "A v'haveva vist alla f&, e per quest a burlava cosl."

ran and roared to hold the good jest up, and hacked his sword and bloodied his own and his companions' clothing on the certain calculation that he should be betrayed,¹ little enough would depend on his evasions. Actually, as with all stage cowards, here lies the center of interest.² The Prince and Poins press him hard:

Prince: What trick, what device, what starting-hole canst thou now find out to hide thee from this open and apparent shame?

Poins: Come, let's hear, Jack; what trick hast thou now?—Part I, II, iv, 293.

Prince: I shall drive you to confess the wilful abuse, and then I know how to handle you.

Poins: Answer, thou dead elm, answer.—Part II, II, iv, 338.

At times his embarrassment is as manifest as their glee, and he turns from bluster to coaxing and wheedling:

Falstaff: No abuse, Hal.

Poins: No abuse?

Fal.: No abuse, Ned, i' the world; honest Ned, none.³—Part II, II, iv, 290-94.

In his wit lies the only difference between his evasions and those of Bessus, Bobadill, or Jodelet. Theirs, comical often without humor like those of Bacchus and Xanthias in the *Frogs*, are mere excuses and do not save them;⁴ Falstaff's are as unpleasurable and far-fetched as theirs, but, as Poins forbodes, they deliberately "drive the Prince out of his revenge and turn all to a merriment." They are laughed at, but often they turn the laugh. They are jests for profit, as Burckhardt⁵ would no doubt have called them, for profit and delight, and little akin to that pale species reared by philosophy and philanthropy, which craves no hearing but, like virtue, is its own reward. They are such jests as those of Shakespeare's clowns or fools when they beg or are threatened, those of Sancho Panza and Panurge, Eulenspiegel and

¹ Quoted freely from Lloyd, p. 224; Maginn, pp. 47, 51.

² As for the Capitano, see Herman Grimm, *Essays* (1859), p. 165; for other braggart cowards see Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du Théâtre: La Comédie*, p. 258.

³ Cf. a similar passage, Part I, II, iv, 260-64.

⁴ *Every Man in His Humour*, IV, v, "Sure, I was struck with a planet thence"; IV, vii, "I was fascinated, by Jupiter" (so Ruzzante suffers from enchantment); *A King and No King*, III, ii; *Jodelet Maître-Valet*, IV, vii, "Quoi! c'est votre neveu? Je ne me bats pas!" etc.

⁵ *Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (1890), p. 157.

Kalenberg, or those in the old fabliaux. In one of these last, indeed, the celebrated *Lai d'Aristote* of d'Andeli, there is an evasion, remarkably like some of Falstaff's, of which the purpose and effect are specifically indicated. We remember: "Thou knowest that in the state of innocence Adam fell; and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in the days of villainy? Thou seest I have more flesh than another man," etc. Again we remember: "I dispraised him before the wicked that the wicked might not fall in love with him; in which doing, I have done the part of a careful friend and a true subject," etc. In the same spirit Aristotle when, having rebuked Alexander for giving way to carnal pleasures, he is discovered as he goes bridled and saddled and ridden by the vindictive damsels through the garden, cries to his jeering sovereign:

Sire, fait-il, vos dites voir!
 Mais or poés vos bien savoir:
 J'oi droit que je doutai de vos,
 Car en fin jo vent ardés vos
 Et en fu droite jouenece,
 Quant jo qui sui plains de vellece
 Ne puis contre amor rendre estal
 Qu'eile ne m'ait torné a mal
 Li grant com vos avés véu.
 Quant que j'ai apris et léu
 M'a desfait nature en i eure
 Qui tote science deveure
 Pus qu'eile s'en veut entremetre;
 Et se jo voil dont paine metre
 A vos oster de sa prison,

So he too turns all to merriment. Alexander congratulates the damsels on the revenge she had furnished them, but

tant s'en fu bien escusés
 De ce que il fu amusés
 Qu'en riant li rois li pardonne.

So Falstaff seeks neither to "amuse the Prince" nor to excuse himself, but does both together as the better way of reaching either end.

All this reasoning is founded, I hope, on what is simple and sensuous, and therefore truly of the stage. The fatal objection to the theory that Falstaff is feigning and literally "looking for trouble"

is that he keeps his joke to himself. There are no such jokes on the stage. At least it must have got into a soliloquy—in Shakespeare's time it must needs have been thrust upon the notice of the Prince and Poins and have covered them with confusion. In Shakespeare the battle is to the strong, success never looks like failure, or honor like dishonor, and for him and his audience it is not a humorous thing to keep one's humor hid. Perhaps there was never a more amazing transformation in the history of criticism than this of our fat knight into a sort of Andrea del Sarto,—

I, *jesting* from myself and to myself,
Know what I do—am not moved by men's blame
Or their praise either.

Now this principle of a looser unity, which is the main thread we have been tracing—of identity in the dramatic function and tone rather than in mental quality and processes—explains much else in Falstaff. The quickness and readiness with which he faces about, which prompts Bulthaupt to think that in his boasting he is not sincere, is due simply to the fact that here he is wit again, not buffoon. It is required of him to be entertaining rather than plausible. And this explains his so-called presence of mind, his joking amid carnage and in the teeth of death. It is not that he is a Mercutio, game to the last, but that he jokes regardless of psychological propriety, as Elizabethan clowns do whether in battle or in the house of mourning, or as Sosia does, trembling before Mercury,¹ or the gracioso Guarin does, in Calderon's *Puente de Mantible*,² though much frightened, with the giant, or the cowardly Polidoro, in *El Mayor Monstruo*, though threatened with immediate hanging.

Looser unity, moreover, irrelevancy, or carelessness of detail—it matters not which, for probably Shakespeare seldom conceived his characters apart from the plot—explains quite as well as the tradition of the *miles* the fact that in other ways Falstaff ceases for moments to be a coward. His fighting with Pistol, from which Mr. Bradley says a stock coward would have shrunk, and his capturing Colville and exchanging a blow or two with Hal and Poins on Gadshill are like the conduct of the gracioso Brito in Calderon's *Principe*

¹ *Amphytrion* of Plautus and of Molière, sc. 1.

² II, x and xi.

Constante,¹ who, after falling and feigning death like Falstaff, starts up and secures a fresh comic effect by chasing off the stage the two Moors who come to rob his body; or of Ambidexter, in *Cambyses*, who beats Huf, Ruf, and Snuf before he himself is beaten by the women; or of Sganarelle, who, after his pigeon-livered soliloquy cited below, appears, crying out upon his enemy, in full armor—to keep off the rain! or of Panurge and Cingar, who, though cowards, having many vices besides, exhibit them, as Falstaff does his thievishness and his bibulousness on the battlefield, as if their cowardice were quite forgotten. Though "of blows he was naturally fearful," in the campaign against the Dipsodes Panurge is as bold as brass and as cool as a cucumber.² And Pulcinella, we have seen, is both *lâche* and *féroce*.

Elsewhere as well Shakespeare does not keep strictly to his scheme. Shylock is conceived in prejudice, doomed to ridicule and dishonor, yet is given now and then a touch of incompatible tenderness.³ Polonius is sensible enough at first, yet in the second act he is indeed an "ass."⁴ And as for the "indecorum" of Falstaff's presence unabashed and unreproved before the King at Shrewsbury, of which Morgann and his followers complain (unless indeed it be granted them as an intentional compliment to his valor, or evidence of his being an established courtier and "counsellor of state"),⁵ why in Elizabethan drama are fools⁶ and clowns forever elbowing kings or emperors without a ghost of a pretext or excuse? To jest, and Falstaff jests. "Peace, chewet, peace!" cries the Prince to our "counsellor" once really, according to Elizabethan notions,

¹ I, xiv and xx.

² In Book II, chaps. 27, 29, he gives a cry of pleasure at the approaching conflict, and he creeps among the fallen and cuts their throats. Yet see at the close of chap. 21 his fright when blows are threatened; (IV, chap. 5) when Dingdong draws his sword; (IV, chaps. 19, 23, 24) when there is a storm at sea; (chaps. 66, 67) when there is can-nondrag.

³ See my article "Shylock" (cited above), p. 276.

⁴ See Mr. A. B. Walkley, *op. cit.* Urged by the craving for unity, as usual, critics have found the wisdom of Polonius in I, III, jejune and insipid. So is the Duke's, then, in *Measure for Measure*, III, i, and that of many another moralist in Shakespeare. And even if jejune and insipid, "hard and unvital," it is not silly, not asinine, and the character is not much more of a unit than before. Coleridge, urged by the same craving, finds him too wise to be meant for a comic character!

⁵ Morgann, pp. 43-44.

⁶ In this case, of course, there is often the reason that they belong to the household.

the decorum is broken. About as much is to be made of Falstaff's presence in the council as of his "familiarity" with John of Gaunt and Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk. Once upon a time he joked with the one, and in his youth he was page to the other. In Elizabethan drama anybody jokes with a king and a king jokes with anybody, and Falstaff wins little credit with us for once having tried it with John of Gaunt in the Tiltyard. What does it matter, moreover, whether, as Morgann and Maginn will have it, he is a gentleman? So is Panurge,¹ and a coward, and "a very dissolute and debauched fellow if there were any in Paris." The pith and root of the matter is that criticism has no right thus to insist upon details and follow them up further—his seal ring worth forty mark, his bonds, and his pension² (if ever he had them) as tokens of respectability—for in the treatment of these Shakespeare and his fellows were even more self-contradictory and unpleasing than we have already seen him to be in matters of capital importance. Sancho rides his stolen ass again before he has recovered her, and Comus, as he welcomes "midnight shout and revelry" and "the secret flames of midnight torches," now finds the star "that bids the shepherd fold" at the top of heaven.³ What then could be expected of one who was not writing for print?

So far nothing has been said of the *Merry Wives of Windsor* because of the prevalent opinion that this Falstaff is another man. Here he is a butt and no mistake. But Mr. Bradley himself says that there are speeches in the play recognizable as Falstaff's in quantity sufficient to fill one side of a sheet of note-paper. Moreover, the figure of the braggart captain who came into Shakespeare's hands from Plautus or from the *Comedy of Masks* would have been incomplete if he had not appeared as the suitor gulled.⁴ Yet all that I care to insist upon is that in this play as in *Henry IV* the supreme comical figure is again both butt and wit. Again for purposes of mirth he fails to see through the tricks played upon him, and yet, though

¹ Book II, chap. 9: "Nature hath extracted him from some rich and noble race."

² Morgann, p. 59. The pension, of course, he is only expecting—or *says* he is expecting.

³ I am aware that "top" has been made to mean not top but "fairly high up" in the heavens; which shows how much more precious in the eyes of a commentator is consistency than the gift of expression. There is no meaning to the phrase unless it be that time has passed and the star in the western sky is now higher than it was.

⁴ This is the lot of both Pyrgopolinices and the Capitano.

he is clever enough, surely nobody will have him feigning and dissembling, or trying to "amuse" himself or the women of Windsor by chivalrously falling in with their vindictive schemes.

A coward, then, if ever there was one, has Falstaff a philosophy? Military freethinking has been attributed to him to lift the stigma on his name. Believing not in honor, he is not bound by it. And by the Germans¹ and Mr. Bradley, as we have remarked, the scope of his philosophy has been widened, and he has been turned into a practical Pyrrhonist and moral nihilist, to whom virtue is "a fig," truth absurd, and all the obligations of society stumbling-blocks and nuisances. In various ways, by the English and the Germans alike, he has been thought to deny and destroy all moral values and ideals of life, not only for his own but for our behoof. So in a certain sense he is inspired by principle—of an anarchistic sort—not void of it.

Only at one ideal—honor—does Falstaff seem to me to cavil, and that he is only shirking and dodging. How does he, as Mr. Bradley thinks, make truth absurd by lying; or law, by evading the attacks of its highest representative; or patriotism, by abusing the King's press and filling his pockets with bribes?² Or matrimony (logic would not forbear to add) by consorting with Mistresses Ursula, Quickly, and Tearsheet, thus lifting us into an atmosphere of freedom indeed? It fairly makes your head turn to see a simple picaresque narrative like that of Panurge or Sir Toby Belch brought to such an upshot as that.

As it seems to me, his catechism on the battlefield and his deliverances on honor³ are to be taken not as coming from his heart of hearts but from his wits and to cover his shame.⁴ Like disreputable characters in mediaeval and Renaissance drama and fiction without number, he unconsciously gives himself away. His "philosophy" is but a shift and evasion, and in his catechism he eludes the claim of honor when put by his conscience just as he does when put by the

¹ In various degrees by Ulrici, Gervinus, Rötscher, Vischer, Graf, and Bulthaupt. The only one who explicitly dissents is Wetz. Wolff (I, 422), though he finds in Falstaff no depths of philosophy, does not look upon the "catechism" as a confession of cowardice.

² *Oxford Lectures*, pp. 262–63.

³ Part I, V, i, 127–43; iii, 61–65; iv, 110–30.

⁴ Cf. Wetz.

Prince and Poins. When he declares discretion to be the better part of valor there is no more philosophy in him than in Panurge and the Franc Archier de Baignollet when they avow that they fear nothing but danger, or than in himself when he swears that instinct is a great matter, and purse-taking no sin but his vocation. When he cries "Give me life" and "I like not the grinning honor that Sir Walter hath," there is no more Pyrrhonism or Epicureanism in him than there is idealism when, in defending his choice of the unlikeliest men for his company, he cries, "Give me the spirit, Master Shallow," meaning, "give me the crowns and shillings, Mouldy and Bulcalf." Here as there, he only dodges and shuffles. As in his fits of remorse we have seen, he is not "dead to morality" or free from its claims; neither does he frankly oppose them, or succeed in "covering them with immortal ridicule"; but in sophistry he takes refuge from them and the ridicule rebounds on his own head.

Half a dozen egregious cowards in Shakespeare's time, at any rate, talk in Falstaff's vein when in danger, and yet are not, and cannot be, thought philosophers for their pains. The coward and braggart Basilisco, with whom Shakespeare was acquainted, goes through a catechism before action, too, on the power of death and the futility of love and honor in the face of it.¹ What is at the back of his mind a child could see. The nearest other parallels are independent of Shakespeare, but are fashioned by the same ironical and satiric spirit. In Molière's *Cocu imaginaire*, Sganarelle subtilizes on death and a husband's honor much as Falstaff does on death and a soldier's honor. Discretion is his pet virtue too.

Je ne suis point battant, de peur d'être battu,
Et l'humeur débonnaire est ma grande vertu;

and if in this faith he should waver, once play the bold fellow, and get for his virtue a villainous thrust in the paunch—

Que par la ville ira le bruit de mon trépas,
Dites-moi, mon honneur, en serez vous plus gras?

"Give me life," once more, not grinning honor—

Qu'il vaut mieux être encor cocu que trépassé;

¹ *Soliman and Perseda*, V, iii, 63-95. The parallel being well known, I do not dwell on it. Shakespeare's acquaintance with the play is proved by *King John*, I, i, 244.

and therefore he considers whether loss of honor can damage the limbs as Falstaff considers whether the winning of honor will mend them:

Quel mal cela fait-il ? la jambe en devient-elle
Plus tortue, après tout, et la taille moins belle ?

Before the scene is over he confesses his cowardice explicitly and in scene xxi, as we have noticed, it becomes apparent in deed.

Another arrant coward, also self-confessed, Jodelet in Scarron's *Jodelet Duelliste* (1646),¹ inveighs against honor as a silly thing, causing much inconvenience, and considers the damage done because of it to various parts of the body, through the least puncture in which the spirit may escape—through puncture in heart, liver, kidney, lungs, or an artery—gods! the very thought takes his breath! And he “likes not” death because it is stupid,² and too “forward” with a fellow,

Et sans considérer qui la veut ou refuse,
L'indiscrète qu'elle est, grippe, vousit ou non,
Pauvre, riche, poltron, vaillant, mauvais et bon (V, i).

So in the earlier play, *Jodelet Maître-Valet*, when he considers:

Que le corps enfin doit pourrir,
Le corps humain, où la prudence
Et l'honneur font leur résidence,
Je m'afflige jusqu' au mourir.
Quoi ! cinq doigts mis sur une face ! (IV, ii).

For, as in the later play, he has had his ears boxed, and the better part is discretion.

Thus continually in the popular farces of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries cowardice coquets with prudence, discretion, or philanthropy, but in thrusting back the claims of honor only betrays, as in Falstaff, terror at what comes in its trail. It gives itself away by an irony which recoils like a boomerang. Falstaff's discretion, Moron's “bon sens,” Parolles’ “for advantage,”³ and even humarer

¹ Cited in Despois, *Molière*, t. II, 198–200, where also is cited the parallel of Falstaff's catechism. Cf. also M. de Pourceaugnac (III, ii), who disclaims the fear of death as he flees from the law in the garb of a woman, but thinks it “facheux à un gentilhomme d'être pendu.”

² “Camuse.”

³ *All's Well*, I, ii, 215.

sentiments are the subterfuges of cowards on the popular stage in Venice and Nürnberg as in London and Paris. In the old farce *L'Avantureux*, Guillot has fled from Marolles but retired at his ease as far as—to Pontoise!—for a soldier who is quick to strike

Se doit bien tenir loin.
Jamais je n'eus intention
De faire homicidation.¹

Likewise the Franc Archier de Baignollet retreats (for to him as to Sancho retreating is not fleeing) only a trifle, from Angers to Lyons. And Ruzzante in Beoleo's First Dialogue is even of the opinion, born of immediate experience, that to run and hide takes a lot of courage.² Possibly the closest parallel to Falstaff's gammon about honor appears in a fifteenth century Fastnachtspiel, in which the faint-hearted knights excuse themselves from following the Emperor into battle. The Second Knight says:

Scholt ich mich da geben zu sterben,
Das ich da mit solt er erwerben,
Was möcht mir die er gefrumen
Wenn ich nit mocht her wider kumen?
Wann ich hab selbs daheim er und gut
Und ain schöns weib, das gibt mir mut.³

Somewhat like are the others, and the Fourth Knight stipulates that he shall be permitted to ride to the charge behind the Emperor, because to ride before does not beseem him, and

ich will eben zu sehen
Von wem euch schaden sei geschehen.

On both Emperor and Ausschreier all this makes but one impression—and at the end they say as much—that of cowardice unalloyed. Somewhat the same are the sentiments of Panurge, and the ironical method is more obvious in him than in any:

Let's whip it away, I never find myself to have a bit of Courage at Sea:
In Cellars and elsewhere I have more than enough: Let's fly, and save our Bacon. I do not say this for any Fear that I have; for I dread nothing

¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 130–40. The same sentiment is a pretext of Ruzzante (cited below) to explain why he brings no booty home from war.

² (*Venezia*, 1565) f. 5: "le un gran cuore chi se mette mazzare."

³ Keller (1853), No. 75.

but Danger, that I don't: I always say it, that shouldn't. . . . We'll lose no Honour by flying; Demosthenes saith, That the man that runs away may fight another time.—IV, chap. 55 (cf. chap. 23).

All these cowardly characters have a burlesque "philosophy" comparable to Falstaff's, which in their case cannot extenuate the shame and therefore should not in his. Like Falstaff they but make of it a veil of dissimulation, and drolly peep from behind it. Here lingers mediaeval satire as we find it in capital form in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, or in the old farce of the widow who hears, as the bells toll for her husband's death, the heavenly admonition

Pren ton valet, pren ton valet;¹

and as people were clever enough to take that for nothing but the unconscious confession of a lascivious spirit, so they took Falstaff's and these other fellows' discretion and prudence and aversion to grinning honor and stupid death, not by any means for what to our eager sympathy they seem to be. That in all its transparency this satiric and ironical understatement is not foreign to Shakespeare's method with Falstaff in general appears not only in many of his evasions, as we have seen, but in his famous talk with Bardolph, alluded to above:

—virtuous enough, swore little, diced not above seven times a week, went to a bawdy-house not above once in a quarter—of an hour, paid money that I borrowed three or four times.

And as elsewhere it is used in Shakespeare, in Shylock's outcries—

I would my daughter were dead at my foot—and the jewels in her ear.
Would she were hearsed at my foot—and the ducats in her coffin . . . ?²

and used by Molière or by Sheridan, or by so recent a dramatist as Robertson, the humor, like that involved in Falstaff's "incomprehensible lies" and his remorse, seems meant to be unconscious, not intentional.³

¹ *Robinet Badin*. Le Roux de Lincy, t. III, 142.

² See my article, "Shylock," p. 274. This punctuation is mine.

³ *Malade imaginaire*, I, ix, near end, Béline's similar after-thoughts; *School for Scandal*, IV, iii, "who never in my life denied him—my advice"; *Rivals*, V, iii, "He generally kills a man a week, don't you Bob? *Acres*: Ay—at home!"; *Caste*, III, i, 239, *Eccles*: "Nothing like work—for the young," etc.

One reason why in Falstaff we fail to penetrate this mask of unrealistic and malicious portrayal, and take his words to heart, is that they are in soliloquy. A man does not banter himself. But on the stage in those times and before them a man did, and all soliloquy is phrased more as if the character were addressing himself or the audience than as if he were thinking aloud. Hence in comic soliloquy¹ allowances are to be made, just as later, when Falstaff holds forth on sack as the cause of valor, which is another underhand confession of cowardice, and when Benedick declares that the world must be peopled, which is a confession of a tenderer sort.² It is an irony which touches the speaker, not the thing spoken of, and dissolves away not all the seriousness of life but the speaker's pretenses; it is the exposure, not the expression, of his "inmost self."³ When Falstaff seems to be talking principle, he is, as we now say, only "putting it mildly": in his own time he gave himself away; in ours he takes the learned in.

But the main reason for our failure to penetrate the mask is that in or out of soliloquy this particular method of dramatic expression is a thing outworn, outgrown. Characters are no longer driven to banter or expose themselves, or the better audiences resent it if they are. Psychology—born of sympathy—will have none of it, as a method too external, ill-fitting, double-tongued. If the person be taken to be consciously jesting—the widow about wedding while mourning, Falstaff about the vanity of honor, or Robertson's Eccles about the wholesomeness of work—he seems then and there to be out of character; yet it is hard to see how he can have been unconscious, either, and it is manifest that the author is more intent on the jest, or, in the case of Quickly above, on the double entendre, than on the main or philosophic drift;—and yet (once again) this self-consciousness and mirth surely do not imply, as in the writing of today they must needs imply, "freedom" or detachment, any measure of indifference or superiority to the pleasure of incontinently

¹ See my articles: "Anachronism in Shakespeare Criticism," *Modern Philology*, April, 1910, pp. 561-62; "Criminals in Shakespeare," *ibid.*, July, 1912, pp. 68-69; "Hamlet and Iago." Such cases as the present or such as Hamlet's self-reproaches are the only ones where statements in soliloquy are to be discounted. Nothing subconscious can be intended.

² *Much Ado*, II, iii, 227-55. Wetz compares this soliloquy with Falstaff's.

³ Wetz, pp. 402-3, quoting Rötscher.

taking one's valet, keeping one's arms and legs whole, or sponging in bibulous sloth. The pith of the matter, then, is that the lines of the character are, for us, confused, the author seems to peer through and wink at the audience, and our modern sympathy and craving for reality are vexed and thwarted, somewhat as they are by the self-consciousness of the villains or by the butt-and-wit-in-one. Indeed, unless the character be taken to be unconscious, we seem here to have a case of butt-and-wit-in-one at one and the same moment. For these reasons this method of comic portrayal, which goes back at least to the Middle Ages, and occurs not only in Elizabethan comic drama but in the greatest comic drama since—in Congreve, Sheridan, not to mention Molière—has, like butt-and-wit-in-one or self-conscious villainy, been dropped by the modern spirit as a strange, ill-fitting garment, and, since Robertson and Gilbert, has been relegated to frank satire and farce.

How petty and personal Falstaff's philosophy is on the face of it! Bulthaupt, Gervinus, Ulrici, Rötscher, and others after them speak of him sapping the foundations of morality, and Bulthaupt compares him "picking the notion of honor to pieces" with Trast in Sudermann's *Ehre!* There indeed, or in *Arms and the Man*, or in *Major Barbara*, honor reels and totters; but here it comes "unsought for," "pricks" our captain on, and drives him to hide from before its face. By word and by deed he shows that he is not more indifferent to a soldier's honor than is Sganarelle to a husband's, and like him he snatches it greedily when he can. It is the "grin" that he "likes not," and since the beginning of things no philosophy has been needed for that.

For Falstaff is simple as the dramatist and his times. By him the chivalric ideal is never questioned; Hotspur is comical only for his testiness, not for the extravagance and fanaticism of his derring-do. To some critics Falstaff seems a parody or burlesque of knighthood, and they are reminded of the contemporary Quixote and his Squire. But the only parallel or contrast¹ between knight and

¹ The parallels discovered by Ulrici (Book VI, chap. 7), such as the robbery as a withering travesty of the Hotspur rebellion, or the whole Falstaff episode as intended to parody the hollow pathos of the political history and to assist in scattering the vain deceptive halo with which it has been surrounded, are further symptoms of the craving for unity from which all impressionistic and philosophical critics suffer.

clown suggested is on the battlefield, and there as in Calderon's comedies the ridicule is directed at the clown alone. In the story of Cervantes himself it is so; the chivalric ideal stands unchallenged, though the romantic and sentimental extravagances are scattered like the rear of darkness thin. Even by these Shakespeare is untroubled, and true to the spirit of the Renaissance all his heroes cherish their fame and worship glory. To him as to Molière and Cervantes himself Moron's confession that he had rather live two days in the world than a thousand years in history,¹ would, even in less compromising circumstances, have seemed but clownish and craven, though to us it would seem neither, in our mystical adoration of life and indifference to fame. "Give me life!"—we sadly mistake the ascetic, stoical, chivalric principles, coming down from the earliest times through the Renaissance even to our own, if we fancy that in England or in Italy² there were many who could keep a good conscience and say it. Romeo, Hamlet, Brutus, Othello and Desdemona, Antony and his queen, are, like the ancients, far from saying it, though only happiness, not honor, is at stake. The men of the Renaissance loved life because they had found it sweet, but—especially the Elizabethans—they had not learned to think much better of it than the world had thought before. They loved it as well as we, but not, like us, from principle and as a tenet of their faith.

As incapable as is Shakespeare (in the person of his heroes) of swerving from the conventional standard of honor himself, so incapable is he of comprehending those who swerve. For his clowns the standard is set as for his villains. Sometimes, indeed, though only as rebels, the villains set up a standard of their own, as when Iago asserts the supremacy of his will, calls virtue a fig and reputation an idle and most false imposition.³ But Falstaff is neither rebel nor critic. As clown he is supposed to have neither philosophy nor anti-philosophy, being a comic contrast and appendage to the heroes and the heroic point of view. His cavilings at honor are made

¹ *Princesse d'Élide*, I, ii.

² Bruno would have come nearest to it. Men like Aretino, as in his letter to Strozzi, in 1537, say it cynically. When moved, all Elizabethans, at least in plays, think of death, and so do the Italians of the Renaissance. This subject I hope later to develop more fully.

³ *Othello*, I, iii, 321-38; II, iii, 266-70.

utterly nugatory and frivolous, and his jokes are but telltale wards and feints. Like all stage cowards from Colin to Acres he fulfills the requirements of Mr. Bradley's definition, "feeling a painful fear in the presence of danger and yielding to that fear in spite of his better feelings and convictions." There indeed lies the old-time humor of our knight on the battlefield—quaking and joking as honor pricks him on! As in his fits of remorse or in his incomprehensible lies, he is not merry but "an object of mirth." He is funny not because he feigns and really is "free," but because at uncomfortable moments he pulls so hard on the bit. On his deathbed, I suppose, he was not feigning, and no enfranchised "Ephesian" would there have cried out of sack,¹ of women—or the Whore of Babylon, as Quickly's loyalty and piety would have it.

In that last glimpse is none of the subtlety or indulgence of today. According to Mackenzie, the Man of Feeling, his cowardice is "less a weakness than a principle." He lives as he thinks, as how few of us do! He renounces the "grinning idol," thinks Sir Walter Raleigh, and "runs away or counterfeits death with more courage than others show in deeds of knightly daring." How a saying like that makes the world whirl round us again in the familiar Ptolemaic fashion!² Such transcendental paradox on the one hand, such indulgence to temperament and principle on the other, were unknown to the Sage of Stratford and his time. As I have shown in connection with Shylock³ and the villains, if so Falstaff should think, the worse for him! But the fact is, as we have seen, that Shakespeare has Falstaff at heart think like everyone else, and calls a spade a spade. For him and his fellows a coward is such regardless of distinctions between character and conduct, constitution and principle, and might as well at once have done with them and stick the rabbit scut in his hat. In the comedies of Morgann's own day, as in the mediæval farces, all extenuating distinctions were without a difference. "Look 'ee, Sir Lucius," cries Bob Acres, like another Colin or Jodellet; "'tisn't that I mind the word coward—coward may be said in

¹ Giuseppe Barone (*Un Antenato di Falstaff*) mistakes the expression, and has him cry out for sack and women. Just so he would have been presented today: living or dying, our funny men are not troubled with compunctions.

² The great merit of Sir Walter Raleigh's book is that as a whole it does not do this.

³ In *Shylock*, pp. 270-71.

joke. But if you had called me a poltroon, odds daggers and balls!" And when in mellower times Mr. Shaw in *Candida* attempted to establish a difference, and to represent, not one cowardly in principle and courageous by constitution, but one courageous in principle and cowardly by constitution—a compound less dubious and mistakes—what a deal of exposition and manipulation was required!

Subtilized and also sentimentalized! Mr. Bradley does not mind saying that he for one is glad that Falstaff ran away on Gadshill; M. Stapfer declares that morally he was no worse than you or I; and Hazlitt, lost in sympathy with Falstaff in the blighting of his hopes at the succession, resentfully asserts that he was a better man than the Prince. That is, the character is lifted bodily out of the dramatist's reach. Falstaff is a rogue, and people cannot like him: twice Morgann protests that in order to be comical at all he must be "void of evil motive." Lying for profit and jesting for profit, the cheating and swindling of your unsophisticated admirers, gluttony, lechery, extortion, highway robbery, and cowardice—pray, what is funny about all these? Hence the profit has been turned to jest, the misdemeanors to make-believe. Not otherwise Hercules in the *Alcestis* was thought by Browning to get roaring drunk, not for his own private satisfaction but for that of the mourners¹—and there is another who in the good cause of human happiness does not mind making a fool of himself! So it must be when we take a character to our bosoms out of an old play like a pet out of the jungle—we must extract his sting. This by the critics has been duly done, to Falstaff as to Shylock. Our "white-bearded Satan" has had his claws pared.

For those who have not learned to think historically cannot stomach the picaresque. It matters not to them that nearly all the professional comic characters of Elizabethan drama, as of all drama before it, have a vein of roguery in them—Sir Toby as well as Autolycus, the Clown as well as the Vice; or that in those days high and low were rejoicing in the roguery romances, English, French, or Spanish. Yet these people delighted in Falstaff as unreservedly as does the Prince in the play. That they did not take him for an innocuous mimic and merrymaker numerous allusions in the seventeenth century, as we have already seen, attest. And Hal loved

¹ See Jebb's comment, article "Euripides," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

him as Morgante loved Margutte, as Baldus loved Cingar, and Pantagruel—"all his life long"—loved Panurge, not for his humor only but for his lies and deviltry. They had their notions of "a character" as we have ours. With endless variety of repetition Rabelais revels in notions of drunkenness, gluttony, lasciviousness, and in tricks of cheating and cruelty, as things funny in themselves. With what gusto he tells of the outrages perpetrated by Panurge on the watch, the difficult Parisian lady, and Dingdong and his flock, and of Friar John's slaying and curiously and expertly mutilating his thousands with the staff of the cross in the abbey close! And yet, frowning down the facts, the critics declare that Falstaff had no malice in him,¹ and though he laments the repayment had no intention of keeping the stolen money, repaid Quickly full measure and running over with his company, and after all did no mentionable injury to Shallow, who had land and beeves. "Where does he cheat the weak," cries Maginn, "or prey upon the poor?" There is Quickly, poor, and weak at least before his blandishments, "made to serve his uses both in purse and in person"; and there are Bullelfal, who has a desire to stay with his friends, and Mouldy, whose dame is old and cannot help herself, both swindled in the name of the King, as Wart, Feeble, and Shadow, the unlikeliest men, are wrongfully pressed into service. All this once was funny, and now is base and pitiful,² but why should we either shut our eyes to it or bewail it? Surely we cannot with Morgann make allowances for his age and corpulence (how that would have staggered an Elizabethan!) and corrupting associations; or with Maginn trace the pathos of his degradation, hope after hope breaking down; or with Swinburne discover the well of tenderness within him, his heart being "fractured and corroborate," not for material disappointment, but for wounded love.³ With this last the present Chief Secretary

¹ Raleigh, p. 189; Wolff, I, p. 423; cf. Part II, III, II, 353-57; IV, III, 137-42.

² The scenes (Part I, III, iii; Part II, II, i) where Falstaff, upbraided by Quickly, retorts in chirk and clever vein, resemble the scene in *Le Médecin malgré lui* where Sganarelle does the same to his long-suffering wife. And the scene where the latter imposes on the country bumpkins with fraudulent remedies resembles that in which Falstaff and Bardolph fleece the conscripts.

³ If Shakespeare means that he really is heartbroken (which Mr. Birrell denies) it is not the first or the last time that the dramatist permits himself a bit of sentiment upon the death of the unworthy.

for Ireland is properly disgusted, though in being less sentimental he is hardly more Elizabethan in spirit as he calls him "in a very real sense a terrible character, so old and so profane"!¹ Yet Mr. Birrell remembers him (where others have been glad to forget him) with Doll at the Boar's Head, and he reads an unexpurgated text. And if he does not look with the eyes of an Elizabethan, he looks with his own, and sees the old rogue and satyr in his heathen nakedness, not in the breeches that, like Volterra in the Sistine, the critics have hastened to make him.

Morals and sentiments alike, in the lapse of time, obliterate humor. Laughter is essentially a *geste social*, as Meredith and Professor Bergson have truly told us; and the immediate and necessary inference, which no doubt they themselves would have drawn, is that it languishes when the tickled *mores* change. Much that was funny to the Elizabethans or to the court of the Grand Monarch has since become pathetic, as in Shylock and Harpagon, Alceste and Georges Dandin, and "disgusting" or even "terrible," as in Falstaff or Tartuffe. Of this we have just seen repeated instances, and of the process of critical emasculation which in consequence ensues. Even the form and fashion of the older humor has given offense. Most of the English critics apparently have not seen Falstaff on the stage, but those who have cannot recall him there without a shudder. The roaring, the falling flat, and above all the padding—"a very little stuffing," one of them pleads, "would answer all the requirements of the part."² And the padded bulk of his humor, as of his person—"out of all measure, out of all compass"—about his name being terrible to the enemy and known to all Europe, and Turk Gregory never doing such deeds, is so reduced by anachronizing Procrustean critics as to contain "nothing but a light ridicule."³ His ancestral ring seems to have been really of gold, not copper, "though probably a little too much

¹ *Renaissance Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part II*, pp. xvi, xviii. Cf. p. xv: "Falstaff's words 'Kiss me, Doll,' followed by his cry, 'I am old, I am old,' together with other touches in the same scene, might well stand for the last words of disgust and horror." They were meant, certainly, to be funny. Funniest of all, no doubt, was the worst, at the end of the scene, where Bardolph, from within, cries, "Bid Mistress Tearsheet come to my master," and motherly Mistress Quickly bids her run.

² *Fraser's*, xlii: p. 409; Morgann, p. 26, etc.

³ Morgann, pp. 41, 83; Bradley, *Oxford Lectures*, p. 267—"must not be entirely ignored."

alloyed with baser metal."¹ And his "old ward," like his "mankind," Hal might have remembered if he would.² What of the multitudinous knaves in buckram and Kendal green, or of the knight himself at Hal's age not an eagle's talon in the waist or an alderman's thumb-ring, or of the nine score and odd posts he founded as he devoured the road to battle in Gaultree Forest? Even his laugh, which must have been big as his body, riotous as his fancy, lingering and reverberating as the repetitions of his tongue,³ has been taken away.⁴ "The wit is from the head, not the heart. It is anything but fun." If we are to depend on stage directions there is no laughter in Sir Toby either, or almost any other jovial soul in Shakespeare. In robbing these fat knights of their fun critical treason has well-nigh done its worst, though before that it robbed audiences (at the cost of truth though to the profit of morals) of the fun got from Shylock, Harpagon, Dandin, and Tartuffe. On the stage and in the study much of the comedy in Shakespeare and Molière has been smothered out of them from the Romantic Revival⁵ unto this day, and yet we smile at the Middle Ages Christianizing the classics.

ELMER EDGAR STOLL

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

¹ Morgann, p. 54.

² *Ibid.*, p. 148.

³ This rolling of his jest as a sweet morsel between his lips is one of his most striking traits: as "food for powder, food for powder; they'll fill a pit as well as better. Tush, man, mortal men, mortal men!" Cf. "I am old, I am old"; and the manifold repetitions in Part I, II, iv.

⁴ Maginn, p. 56: "he never laughs."

⁵ This is a subject to which I hope to return.

WILLIAM PERCY AND HIS PLAYS
WITH A SUMMARY OF THE CUSTOMS OF ELIZABETHAN
STAGING

The plays of William Percy, third son of Henry, eighth earl of Northumberland, have recently received considerable attention. They exist in a manuscript volume now owned by the Duke of Devonshire, from which Joseph Haselwood reprinted two, *The Cuck-queanes and Cuckolds Errants or the Bearing down the Inn*, 1601, and *The Faery Pastoral or the Forest of Elves*, 1603, in 1824 for the Roxburgh Club. These two have been frequently described, but *The Aphrodysiall or Sea Feast*, 1602,¹ *Necromantes or the Two Supposed Heads*, 1602, *Arabia Sitiens or a Dream of a Dry Year*, 1601, and *A Country's Tragedy in Vacuniam or Cupid's Sacrifice*, 1602, remain practically unknown. All are written, says Haselwood, in the hand of the author and are dated by him. The volume includes other compositions and dates from 1601 to 1647; it seems "a fair transcript of the lucubrations of an earlier period in life" with new readings sometimes pasted over.

The plays are remarkable chiefly for their explicit stage directions, which come nearer than any other contemporary source to giving a detailed account of a theatrical performance in the reign of Elizabeth. Collier (*History of English Dramatic Poetry*, II, 351) was, I believe, the first to call attention to these plays; "his [Percy's] productions of this kind [plays] like his sonnets have little or no merit; as, however, they importantly illustrate the condition of the stage at the period when they were written (soon after the year 1600) I shall have occasion to refer to them hereafter." Carl Grabau ("Zur englischen Bühne um 1600," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, 1902) again called them to the attention of scholars. Subsequent discussions of Elizabethan staging show these plays to be almost uniformly considered important sources of information.

¹ Through the kindness of Dr. Frederick Ives Carpenter, I have been permitted to examine a transcript of this play. It somewhat resembles *The Faery Pastoral* in its general style and in its form of staging.

Two writers, however, hold them to be valueless. Wallace (*Children of the Chapel at the Blackfriars*, 1597-1603, 131) says, "I set no special value upon the elaborate and impossible stage directions or other items taken seriously by many as touching vital points in stage history." This was a natural point of view for Wallace, because the plays show that spectators sat on the stage at Paul's at a date when Wallace maintains this custom was limited to the Blackfriars. Still Wallace' objection is singularly naïve: the directions are not impossible, for there they are; no one would think of crediting a man of Percy's mentality with making up his elaborately consistent system of staging out of whole cloth; the directions demand explanation, not dogmatic denial. Similarly minded to Wallace is Dr. Victor Albright, who in a recent number of this journal¹ calls Percy's plays valueless and uninteresting as theatrical documents, and who states that they "have no connection with the regular Elizabethan stage." "Regular," of course, may mean anything, but whatever Albright means by it, even a cursory examination of recent literature shows that his opinion of the value of these plays is contrary to that of most distinguished writers on the subject.

Thus, Schelling (*Elizabethan Drama*, 1908) repeatedly cites Percy's plays as reliable authorities, and speaks of *The Errants* as affording "singularly interesting evidence . . . of some of the most notable peculiarities of Elizabethan staging" (I, 464). Creizenach (*Geschichte des neueren Dramas*, 1909) uses Percy's *Faery Pastoral* in illustrating general Elizabethan conditions (IV, 430, 437), as does Jusserand (*Literary History of the English People* [1909], III, 65). Lawrence (*Elizabethan Playhouse*, 1912) refers to Percy's plays as "sound evidence for the routine pursued at the Paul's playhouse" (I, 66), and makes several citations. Neuendorff, in the most recent German study of the Elizabethan stage, *Die englische Volksbühne*, uses Percy freely, and so does Graves in the latest study in English, *The Court and the London Theaters* (Chicago, 1913), the latter with special effectiveness. Thus Albright, in taking the position he does, is opposing almost the undivided current of recent opinion.

With so many distinguished scholars to criticize for using Percy's plays, Albright does me a peculiar and certainly an undeserved

¹ "Percy's Plays as Proof of the Elizabethan Stage," *Modern Philology*, October, 1913.

honor in directing against me almost alone his vehement and acrimonious argument. The acrimony we may properly disregard as out of place in such a discussion, but the vehemence is rather significant. As Jussersand remarks (*Literary History of the English People*, III, 65, note), Percy's plays suffice "to demonstrate the untenability of the so-called 'alternation theory,'" and thus, unless Albright can discredit their evidence, he must abandon his view of the Elizabethan stage. Under these circumstances vehemence is perhaps pardonable, but scarcely absurdity, and absurd some of Albright's arguments, as we shall see, certainly are. Moreover, his article exhibits the same defects as his book; in each there is the same blindness to evidence not to his liking; in each the same lack of historical perspective. An examination of the one may therefore serve as a criticism of the other.

The subject itself, except to Albright, is now, it must be confessed, of relatively little importance. The literary value of Percy's plays is nil. As sources of theatrical information they have been used to show nothing which, with one exception, cannot be illustrated from Shakespeare's plays alone, quite disregarding other contemporary drama.¹ The points for which I have used Percy's plays, and to which Albright objects, are the existence of three stage doors, properties on the front stage, act intermissions, simultaneous "incongruous" properties, and dramatic distance. Shakespearean illustrations are as follows, most of them having numerous parallels:

Three doors: *Titus Andronicus*, I, 1: "Enter the Tribunes and Senators aloft. And then enter Saturnius . . . at one doore and Bassanius . . . at the other." At the end of the scene Saturnius says, "Open the Gates and let me in." "They go vp into the Senate House." They could scarcely have gone out through the door by which either had entered. "One door . . . the other" simply shows a custom here blindly followed, which perhaps arose because the third door was usually concealed by the curtain.

Properties on the front stage: Out of many illustrations I choose *Julius Caesar*, III, 1, 2, because it is so often misunderstood. Scene 1

¹ Percy's plays do show a use of locality boards which is nowhere else so completely illustrated in Elizabethan drama; that such signboards existed is adequately proved by considerable other evidence, but Percy's plays furnish a unique statement as to how they were employed.

is in the senate house by the statue of Pompey; it must have had seats for the senate and was probably staged on the rear stage. Scene 2 uses the "public chair" (l. 68) to which Brutus "ascends." This term points to a use of the elevated seat more commonly alluded to as the state or throne, which was kept in the heavens (Prologue to *Every Man in His Humor*; *Faustus*, last scene), and let down from above. It therefore would naturally stand on the front stage, though a few plays (e.g., *Death of Robert, Earl of Huntington*, p. 16) show it either to have stood behind the curtain, or to have had, as Neuendorff supposes, a curtain of its own. Clearly one or the other of these scenes must have been limited to the front stage. Antony could have spoken much more effectively from the dais on which this chair stood than from the higher and more remote balcony.

Act intermissions: *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, end of Act III (folio): "They sleepe all the Act" (i.e., as the play shows, from the end of one act till the beginning of the next).

Simultaneous "incongruous" properties: the tomb in *Titus Andronicus*, I, 1: The scene is before the senate house.

Dramatic distance: that is, the bringing together upon the stage of places naturally a greater distance apart: *Richard III*, V: The tent of Richard beside that of Richmond.

Thus, even if Albright's arguments concerning Percy were unanswerable, no important detail or principle of Elizabethan staging would be seriously drawn into question. Percy's plays are not necessary for proof; they simply furnish compact illustrations. As such they are too convenient to be abandoned simply because of Albright's prejudices, and a consideration of them a little more in detail, though no vital matter, may prove not without interest.

Albright thinks Percy a pedant: "if he had laid aside his classics and his scribbling and attended the Globe where Burbage was giving the first performances of Hamlet he might have written a piece that would have at least some resemblance to an Elizabethan play"; he was "without knowledge of, or at least respect to, the pit-gallery London audience"; he was "a student rhymer with Plautus on his right hand and Terence on his left, and with a bookcase filled with well-worn classics near him." His plays "have no connection whatever with the regular Elizabethan stage": *The Cuck-queanes and*

Cuckolds Errants is an imitation of Plautus; *The Faery Pastoral* "a pedant's attempt at a Latinized play for the court." "Therefore one may as well quote directions from Plautus and Terence to prove his theories of the Shakespearean stage."

Now, one might grant most of Albright's assumptions without at all agreeing with his conclusions. What if Percy were such a pedant as he is pictured, and his plays imitations of Latin comedy? That classical plays were given in such "regular" theaters as the Rose and the Curtain is shown conclusively by Guilpin's lines in his *Skialetheia* (1598):¹

"or if my dispose
Persuade me to a play, I'll to the Rose
Or Curtain, one of Plautus' comedies
Or the pathetic Spaniard's Tragedies."

One has only to look at the index in Schelling's *Elizabethan Drama* to remove any doubts as to the presence in the "regular" English drama of the influence of Plautus and Terence. Albright's conclusion of "aloofness" is therefore singularly insecure.

It really rests on some sort of notion that performances at court and at the private theaters were sharply distinguished in practice and ideals from those at the public theaters. That of course is possible, but it is unlikely, nobody has proved it, and much can be urged against it. Graves's carefully stated dissertation, *The Court and the London Theaters*, shows convincingly that the connection between them has been greatly underestimated. Albright has simply been proceeding on one of those numerous assumptions which too much confuse work in this period. In any case, Percy's plays may have been conspicuously classical without for that reason being "aloof" from the regular drama.

To dismiss Albright's arguments thus, however, would be perhaps to treat them too cavalierly. He has three:

First, *The Errants* and *The Faery Pastoral* are, he says, valueless as sources for Elizabethan stage conditions because of Percy's habit of scene division at the entrance of every character. Plays so divided are, thinks Albright, hopelessly classical and "aloof from the regular Elizabethan drama." If one were inclined to wax satiric at Albright's

¹ Collier, *History of English Dramatic Literature*, III, 319.

expense, here certainly is the opportunity. Many plays furnish evidence contrary to this extraordinary conclusion. But to cite the works of only one author, has Albright forgotten Jonson? Even the modern editions used by Albright preserve Jonson's classical scene division. Is Jonson also "aloof from the regular Elizabethan drama"? As a matter of fact, classical scene division shows simply classical influence, but aloofness not one whit. Albright, in trying to find all the evidence possible for his view, has proved too much.

Again, Albright thinks the aloofness of Percy's plays established by the use in them of Latin words and mythological allusions, not only by lawyers and ladies—that would not provoke his comment—but by "ghosts, soldiers, tradesmen, servants, inn-keepers and street gamins"; this is too much. Such an argument reads strangely in the work of a specialist in drama. When did Sophocles or Shakespeare or Sheridan or for that matter G.B.S. himself, even in this age of realism, hesitate to decorate the speech of soldier or servant? Shall Percy be denied the opportunity to exhibit his Latin brilliance, faint though it be? More than that, Albright has apparently neglected to allow for the rage of the Renaissance for Latin and mythology. In his new devotion to "the remote corners of the Elizabethan drama," which he hints I too much frequent, he seems to have forgotten his Shakespeare. One illustration must suffice: let Albright consider *II Henry IV*, II, 4, where in one page of the Globe edition (420) he may find over a dozen classical allusions in the mouths of exactly the persons he is so concerned about—soldiers, inn-keepers, people of the street. Or let him note Act II, scene 1, of the same play, where an allusion to "Althea's dream," scarcely a common reference, is spoken by a page. That Shakespeare uses an allusion is enough to make it today more or less familiar; Percy's may therefore seem more unusual, but I do not remember that the Latin or the allusions of his plays—I have no copy at hand—are especially recondite. As a matter of fact, this part of Albright's argument is an unfortunate intrusion into his paragraph. His real point is that such a style would not suit the groundlings of the London theaters. But this argument is equally ill-chosen. For Percy seems to have had Paul's more than any other theater in mind, and at Paul's less attention had to be paid, it is likely, to the tastes of the "vulgar." Moreover,

even the writers for the public theaters did not limit their plays to what would suit the understanding gentlemen of the yard. What had Jonson's *Sejanus* for them, or his long disquisitions in *The Alchemist*? What could they make of Chapman's orations or of the soliloquies in *Hamlet*? Finally, even if we admit that Percy's style was not fitted to the London audiences, what difference does that make in this inquiry? Nobody is maintaining that his plays were successful. A man may know everything concerning the theater—I am far from saying that Percy did—and still not be able to gauge the taste of his audience at all. Have we not today plenty of proof of this in too many playwrights? Indeed, Percy's plays have only too much to please the vulgar—more than many successful plays of his day. Albright's second argument is simply beside the mark.

Albright's third and really only important argument concerns the staging. *The Errants*, he says, is staged distinctly in the manner of a Terentian comedy. There is the usual Latin stage, a street or open space between two or more houses, doors, or places. The scene never changes throughout the play. All the visible action takes place on this neutral ground or at the doors of the various houses. This method of staging is Latin but emphatically not English. In English plays the scene is constantly changing. In *The Faery Pastoral* the scene also does not change except that the chapel is opened and closed. Anyone who is familiar with the Elizabethan drama and the Latin drama knows that the stages for the two are entirely different. Thus runs Albright's argument from staging.

The assumptions of this paragraph seem either the result of extraordinary ignorance or of intentional confusion. Albright relegates to a footnote the statement that "The towns in this theatrical world (of *The Errants*) are of course brought into closer relation than in real life." But this is a fundamental, a distinctive difference. Does Albright really mean to maintain that Terentian houses, which conceivably could be on one street, are no different from English towns which the atlas, to say nothing of the play itself, shows to have been miles apart? If so, he must follow his argument a little farther; if *The Errants* is Terentian, so is the Valenciennes stage; so is Sidney's "Asia of the one side and Affrick of the other"; so is the simultaneous staging of the French sixteenth-century plays. In all

these, places are brought into closer relation than in real life, and the scene, as Albright here seems to be using the word, never changes throughout the play. But in this very use of "dramatic distance" lies a distinctive difference between the old platform stage, of which Percy furnishes only one out of numerous examples, and the modern picture stage with its attempts at realistic stage representation. To stretch the Terentian conception of the stage until it cover Percy's is to destroy it entirely.

But this is not all. Albright perhaps almost makes out a superficially satisfactory case, only, however, by burying details of importance but of distinctly unclassical bearing in unemphasized footnotes or by omitting them altogether. One of these regards the use of locality boards. In the footnote just referred to he airily remarks: "Some students have supposed that there were signboards over the doors—but there is absolutely no mention of them in the directions or text, and no need of them on the stage to make the action clear." I can speak only for myself, but to me the explicit stage directions of Percy—made actual in a performance only by the use of signs—are all that save the plays from unintelligibility. So much for the need. As for the mention, does Albright expect the directions to say, "A signboard bearing the name Harwich is neatly tacked up one foot above the left door"? If he does not, I scarcely see how he can expect a more definite direction for signboards to indicate general locations than the one Percy gives. But even in this Albright may be satisfied. My imagined direction is almost equaled in minuteness by the first lines of *The Faery Pastoral*: "Highest aloft and on the Top of the Musick Tree the Title The Faery Pastoral. Beneath him pind on Post of the Tree The Scene Eluida Forest Lowest of all ouer the Canopie ΝΑΙΠΑΙΤΒΟΔΑΙΩΝ or Faery Chappell." And from *The Aphrodysiall*: "In the middle and alofte Oceanus Pallace The Scene being. Next Proteus-Hall." Clearly scene boards, but scarcely, I take it, classical details.

And finally there is a direction in *The Errants* (V, 87) which Albright omits entirely and which adds a feature to the stage picture which is unmistakably Elizabethan. The scene is outside the inn at Colchester, but the landlord "tooke the Bolle (bowl) from behind the Arras." A similar direction occurs in *The Faery Pastoral* (V, 4).

An arras cuts a pretty figure on a Terentian stage; so does it in any street scene on a stage which pretends to present a realistic picture of the background.¹

Of Albright's arguments, then, the first and second prove nothing, and the third seems convincing only so long as one confuses agreed-upon distinctions or omits essential details of evidence. Albright's paper shows that now no more than formerly has he grasped the idea of the Elizabethan stage as a plastic, platform, simultaneous stage. He cannot or does not get away from the modern melodrama with its every scene in a more or less fitting setting. In *Hamlet*, "a typical Elizabethan play," he tells us, "the stage at one time is a parapet, at another the presence chamber of the King, at another a hall in the palace arranged for a play, at another the Queen's closet, at another the graveyard, and so on. How far removed this is from the setting of *The Faery Pastoral* where all is one scene which never changes from the beginning to the end!" But how can Albright say the typical Elizabethan play is full of changes of scene when so diverse and yet so popular plays as *The Malcontent*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *The Alchemist*, and *The Devil's Charter*, to name only a few, vary scarcely at all. Even if it were true that frequent changes of scene characterize the typical play, Percy's plays could still qualify. If they had the usual few directions, Albright could select *The Errants* as an admirable example of a typical play with changing scene: now Maldon, now a street in Colchester, now Harwich, now the Ranger's Lodge, now the country near by. Percy's specific directions forbid this interpretation; Albright must discredit them, and thus we hear that the staging is Terentian! What Albright however really has in mind, I think, is not so much change of scene as change of setting. In that, too, he cannot be so sure of *Hamlet*; the directions actually printed in the play indicate few changes, and neither Albright nor anybody else has proved that others occur. It is true that the scene of *Hamlet* does shift considerably—not so frequently as that of *The Errants* by the way—but the setting of *Hamlet* is almost if not quite as unchanged as that of Percy's plays.

¹ I do not emphasize another particular that is unmistakably unclassical. In *The Faery Pastoral* even Albright admits that the chapel opens and closes; and in *The Aphrodissial* the interior of the hall of Proteus is shown. These interior scenes are of course impossible for the Terentian stage, at least as thought of in the Renaissance.

To discuss the staging of *Hamlet* without prefacing it with a general account of the staging in Shakespeare's theater and the evidence in its support would certainly cause misunderstanding. Space for so much is lacking, but a bare summary may be of some service. Anybody who will read the plays in the original editions or in accurate reprints will have little difficulty in finding that evidence for himself. I hope however to publish it from time to time as opportunity offers. The conclusions to be presented are based on a study of all extant plays which were given in anything like their present form at the Rose after 1594, at the first Globe, or at the first Fortune; all Shakespeare's plays are also included.

As we should expect, the plays demand a stage with at least three doors leading to it, a balcony, trapdoors, and devices in the "heavens" for the lowering and raising of actors and properties. The evidence that the Rose had a stage curtain shutting off a considerable space is unimpeachable, and though it is not so clear for the Globe and Fortune, is still sufficient. There was an elaborate equipment of properties and costumes.

Certain properties usually, though not always, stood on the front stage, especially the throne, the "trees," and the ladders from which the victims were "turned off" in hanging scenes (*Two Lamentable Tragedies*. V, 2); tables, chairs, and stools were often used there. Presumably the larger properties, once put in place, were left on the stage, perhaps until the end of the play, at least until no longer needed. In intervening scenes they were, therefore, to modern notions, incongruous. Other properties were freely admitted to the front stage when the plays made it necessary. The front stage with these various settings was frankly mediaeval, its scene being left vague and neutral a good deal of the time, or changing without the actors leaving the stage. Failure to recognize this use of properties on the front stage renders self-contradictory and useless almost all previous explanations of Elizabethan staging.

That the rear stage was *not* employed for all scenes in rooms or even for all scenes with properties, is almost the clearest fact concerning Elizabethan stage management. The rear stage was used:

1. For practically all "discoveries," though a few required special curtains, for example *Spanish Tragedy*, last scene.

2. For the shop, study, tent, arbor, cave, cell. The tomb was a structure standing on the rear stage, often, it would seem, over the trapdoor. Perhaps some of the settings just named were also structures. When a play used more than one, it is likely that the rear stage served for one of them, and special structures on the front stage for the others. In *The Roaring Girl*, however, three shops seem to have stood side by side on the rear stage.

3. For scenes in which a considerable number of persons were seated formally—Parliaments, Senates, Councils, but seldom it would seem for banquets. A striking example of this use occurs in *Volpone*, IV, 4-6; V, 10, 12. There are a few exceptions to this—thus in *Titus Andronicus*, I, 1, the Senate is seated in the balcony.

4. For parts of scenes supposed to be *in*, when the rest of the scene is *out*. The part that is *in*, and that which is *out* may be respectively a room—the passage or room before it; inside a house, shop, or tent, etc.—the street before it. By no means all interior scenes, it must be repeated, were so represented, but this particular sequence was certainly so arranged. Editors have often misunderstood this, and though the characters in the original editions do not leave the stage, have inserted *exeunt* directions and begun new scenes. A conspicuous example of this occurs in *The Jew of Malta*, Act IV, first 210 lines. The action takes place on the front stage until l. 146, where Barabas enters the house (the rear stage which Ithamore and Friar Barnadine had entered at l. 102) and strangles Friar Barnadine; they stand the body up against the wall of the front stage and then retire to the rear stage, perhaps closing the curtain. After Friar Jacomo has knocked the body down, they re-enter the front stage, seize him, and at the end of the scene, *exeunt* it is likely through the rear stage. Similar examples with passage directly from the front stage to the rear may be found in *Henry VIII*, V, 2, 3; *Julius Caesar*, IV, 2, 3; *The Maid's Tragedy*, V, 1, and *Volpone*, V, 9-12. A similar sequence but with exit and re-entrance occurs in *Every Man in His Humour*, I, 4, 5. Other examples are very numerous; Thorndike discusses one at length from *The Yorkshire Tragedy* (*Kittredge Anniversary Papers*, 272-77). I cannot agree with him that the rear stage is in these scenes usually a sort of back drop, changing the significance of the front stage; this seems a purely modern notion. To

be sure the actors in a crowded scene may have sometimes got out upon the larger space. But *Volpone*, V, 11, shows clearly that in the sequence to which it belongs the people at the trial were all supposed to remain on the rear stage, leaving Volpone alone for this soliloquy. In scenes employing the rear stage for a shop, study, etc., the distinction between rear and front stage is sharply preserved.

5. Where three doors (not three entrances, necessarily) were employed (*Four Prentices of London*, Prologue; *Titus Andronicus*, I, 1).

6. The rear door (and hence the rear stage) was used in all scenes in which a door is emphasized as leading from the lower stage to the balcony, as for example when it is locked or barred, but not in simple cases of entrance or exit. A conspicuous example is to be found in *The Maid's Tragedy*, I, 2. It is interesting to observe how in V, 2, of this play, use of this door is avoided (l. 70) where it would conflict with the use of the rear stage as a bedchamber in the preceding scene.

7. The rear door, and therefore the rear stage, was used, usually in connection with the balcony, to represent the gate to a castle or city, not often to a house. This usage, suggested by Miss Charlotte Porter (*First Folio Shakespeare*), is the only one which I find much difficulty in recognizing. Sometimes one cannot be sure whether the gate is in sight or not. Scenes *within* the gates are also troublesome. A clear illustration of this usage occurs in *Henry V*, III.¹

This formulation of the customary usages of the rear stage—there are others of too infrequent occurrence to be listed here—seems to me valid, partly because they are natural and fitting, but mainly

¹ To make this summary of Elizabethan staging a little more complete, some mention must be made of Prölsz's Law of Re-entry—that no person could leave the stage and return to it immediately, if the scene meanwhile was supposed to have changed. An act interval, one or more speeches, or even stage business, alarms for example, must intervene. Or the one who had gone out might re-enter with several persons. The number of apparent illustrations of this law is truly remarkable, but I am not entirely convinced that the intervening speeches were not written quite as often to indicate a lapse of time as a change of scene. Certainly in some cases the exit and immediate re-entry of characters—but by a different door—was exactly what indicated a change of scene. See *The Iron Age* (p. 379), where it marks the entry of the Greeks into Troy; in *The Brazen Age* (p. 177) it represents the crossing of a river; in *The English Traveller* (p. 66), change from one room to another. A similar case occurs in *The Changeling*, III, 1, 2(Q). Other—unmarked—illustrations of this are to be found, I think, in *Hamlet*, I, 4, 5; *Romeo and Juliet*, II, 1, 2, and a large number of other plays. This action however did not always mean a change of scene; see *The Spanish Tragedy*, III, 11, the scene between Hieronimo and the two Portugales.

because they work without conflict in all the plays of the theaters mentioned. Other theories concerning the rear stage, when applied outside a certain series of plays selected usually because they furnish satisfactory proof to the theorist, and often provided in the original editions with few or no directions, have resulted repeatedly in bringing two rear stage scenes together, which would mean delay in the performance and thus take away any reason for the theories at all. The tests here presented, when applied to all the plays, result in only two or three such clashes and even these are easily explained. Moreover they meet an even severer test, the key I think to Elizabethan staging, the principle of Recurring Properties. When the rear stage was once arranged with a certain setting, it was as a rule left undisturbed until that setting was no longer required; intervening scenes with different settings were given on the front stage. Clear indication of this is offered by *I The Honest Whore*. Resting as it does simply on convenience, this custom would be departed from when departure was easier than observance. Thus in *Sejanus* it is not surprising that the arrangement for the long-separated Senate scenes of III, 1, and V, 10, should be varied for the altar setting of V, 4. But this is one of the very few such interruptions of a recurring setting. With this far-reaching principle, the formulated uses of the rear stage come into not half a dozen conflicts, an agreement too remarkable it seems to me to be fortuitous, and going far to prove their validity.

The application of these principles to some of the plays shows a marked alternation in use of the front and the rear stage. Clear examples of this may be found in *The Merchant of Venice* (caskets), *The Tempest* (cell), *I The Honest Whore* (shop), *Cromwell* (study), etc., where the same setting recurs several times; in *The Battle of Alcazar*, *The Brazen Age*, *Cataline*, etc., where the setting of the rear stage is varied. That there was such an alternation¹ I have repeatedly insisted upon even in criticizing the untenable theories of alternation advanced by some writers. These theories determine the use of the rear stage according to modern notions instead of Elizabethan practice;

¹ By alternation I do not mean here, nor in criticizing the alternation theory have I ever meant, that every front-stage "scene" was followed by a rear-stage scene. Of course there were often several scenes (that is clearings of the stage) on the front stage without any intervening scene on the rear stage. But two differently set rear-stage scenes did not occur in succession, an act intermission or a scene on the front stage intervening to allow for the rearrangement.

they do not recognize the large use of properties on the front stage; they greatly exaggerate the number of scenes given on the rear stage and overemphasize its importance; they think the principle of alternation so rigidly held that dramatists were forced to write scenes exactly analogous to the stop-gap scenes of the modern melodrama. The difference between this sort of alternation and that resulting from the customs here formulated must be apparent.

One misconception I must guard against, that the front stage was cluttered with properties. The great majority of plays require there only the throne, the "trees," perhaps a stool or two; sometimes not even so much as this. The Elizabethan stage was not cluttered, nor primitive, nor confused. It was, however, a transition stage—perhaps for that reason the most interesting and the most difficult to study—for it marks the meeting of the old and the new; on the front stage a frankly mediaeval staging; on the rear the beginnings of the modern picture stage.¹ And this is what we should expect. For the contemporary French stage furnishes us with the clearest examples of simultaneous settings; the Spanish stage was even more "primitive" than the English; even the English stage of the Restoration was not free from traces of inherited mediaeval tradition. All these facts point toward the conclusion that the English stage was mediaeval rather than modern. This conclusion becomes irresistible if we accept Wallace' interpretation² of the records of the early English drama. If it is true that the drama of the public theaters followed the lead of the court—and this has been the belief of many even before Wallace' presentation³—then the stage of the public theaters was certainly mediaeval in principle. For, according to Wallace, Lyly's plays show English drama just at the point where the public theaters on the one side and the private theaters on the other took up the stage traditions of the court and the early Blackfriars. And Lyly's plays are fundamentally mediaeval in staging; see, for example, *Campaspe*, with its scenes in the studio of Apelles,

¹ In *Timon*, V, it seems likely that the "tomb" of scene 3 remained on during scene 4, before the walls of Athens—as a simultaneous setting, that is, on the rear stage. The tomb of *Titus Andronicus*, I, 1, is essentially the same. These are almost the only intrusions of the mediaeval idea into the rear stage which I have noted.

² *Evolution of the English drama*, 1912.

³ Professor Manly has for many years emphasized it in his teaching.

at the palace of Alexander, and before the tub of Diogenes. From the modern point of view the staging of the play is hopelessly confusing; on the mediaeval stage with its conventions of dramatic distance and of simultaneous properties it is simple and entirely consistent. So also, as Lawrence points out (*Elizabethan Playhouse*, I, 59), is the staging of the plays of Marlowe and others. He even finds possibilities of a use of scene boards similar to Percy's in *The Wounds of Civil War*, *Pericles*, *The Fair Maid of the West* (64), to which might be added the names of other plays, *King Leir*, for example.

It is this mediaeval side that Percy's plays mainly illustrate, though the chapel in *The Faery Pastoral* and the hall of Proteus in *The Aphrodysiall* are modern developments. But many other plays besides Percy's, as we have seen, show almost if not quite as strongly the mediaeval setting. The distinctive principle of that setting, as modified by the Elizabethan stage, is not that all necessary properties must be put in place at the beginning of the performance and left there until the end; the principle appears just as truly when a property, once brought on the stage, is left there until no longer necessary, even through scenes in which it is out of place; or, what practically amounts to the same thing, when two properties or localities to be supposed a considerable distance apart are represented side by side. The application of these principles and the system of staging just discussed lead to anything but frequent changes of setting. That is characteristic of the eighteenth-century staging with wings and drops, not of the stage of Shakespeare. To be sure, certain Elizabethan plays did cause the stage hands a considerable shifting of properties, but *Othello*, *The Tempest*, *As You Like It*, *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, *The Four Prentices of London*, *The Woman's Prize*—I choose plays of different types but otherwise almost at random, and certainly all typically Elizabethan—require almost no change of setting, and thus approach closely to that "irregular" characteristic of Percy's plays which so troubles Dr. Albright.

And thus it is with *Hamlet*, though it is so simple in its staging as to present no very interesting problems or illustrations. On the front stage there was a seat or two used in I, 1; III, 2; and perhaps

III, 4. There also probably stood the throne, since the Globe certainly possessed one and it could well be employed in II, 2, and III, 2. Whether these were in place or not when the play began, there is no means of knowing; perhaps the stools were simply vacant ones provided for spectators. In Act V the trapdoor was used for the grave, and a table was brought in. The only certain use of the rear stage was for the arbor (Q1) in the play within the play, III, 2; it may also have been employed for the scenes between Hamlet and his mother, III, 4, and for the graveyard scene. In any case the changes of setting were few indeed.

Thus Albright's argument that the staging of Percy's plays show their "aloofness" from the regular Elizabethan drama really means nothing more than that they do not conform to his idea of what the regular Elizabethan drama should be. But since that idea would also exclude a large number of other plays besides Percy's and since it runs counter to the general history of the drama and of theatrical representation, not Percy's plays but Albright's ideas seem to be what is "aloof." To deny all evidence which does not suit you is an easy way to prove anything. Here particularly it is simply begging the question.

So far I have met Dr. Albright on the grounds which he himself has chosen; I have analyzed his arguments and pointed out their weakness. But there is other evidence—the facts of Percy's life so far as they are known, and the plain indications of his plays. Was Percy the pedant that Albright thinks him, the student writer absorbed in Plautus and Terence, the recluse suffering as a playwright from not attending the Globe theater? Let us see.

The most recent and most accessible accounts of Percy are the article by Sidney Lee in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, and the scattered notices of him in *The House of Percy* by Gerald Brennan, edited by W. A. Lindsay, Vol. II (1902); from these the following is condensed:

Percy was born in 1575. His early boyhood was probably spent at Petworth, his father's place in Sussex, or in London, since during much of this time his father was under suspicion for treason, was for a time imprisoned, and in 1582-83 was ordered to London and confined to the precincts of his town house. This stood near St. Andrews

Hill, Blackfriars, adjoining a tenement afterwards owned by Shakespeare. Even in his boyhood William Percy can scarcely have avoided seeing plays in London. The earl achieved during this period considerable favor at court, but finally in December, 1584, was taken to the Tower, and died there under suspicious circumstances, June 20-21, 1585. By August, William is with his brother, the new earl, in Paris, and the spy, Thomas Rogers, reports to Walsingham that they are implicated with the Duc de Guise in the preparation of a great naval and military expedition against England. In 1586 the earl is in London, in his Blackfriars house, and is soon interested in forming a great library there. In 1590 he moves to Russell House, St. Martin's in the Fields, "at a little distance beyond Charing Cross." There, much to the disgust of his Sussex tenants, with whom he wages a continual feud about it, he remains; he will not even go to the northern border to defend his estates. William meanwhile on June 13, 1589, matriculated from Gloucester Hall, Oxford, and as a student carried on a friendship with Barnabie Barnes. Barnes in 1593 dedicated his *Parthenophil* to "the right noble and virtuous gentleman, M. William Percy," and Percy, in 1594, in his *Sonnets to the Fairest Coelia* included a madrigal in praise of Barnes. In Barnes's *Four Bookes of Offices*, 1606, Percy published also "a poor madrigal." We have here, it is clear, a pretty literary friendship, which becomes all the more significant for our purposes when we remember that Barnes was himself a dramatist, writing for Shakespeare's company *The Devil's Charter* (1606, published 1607), which was played at court by his Majesty's servants. This brings us well past the date of Percy's plays. I have not been able to discover the authority for the statement that Percy was at one time in the Tower on a charge of homicide, nor is it of any particular consequence to us to note that in 1638 he was living at Oxford "holding no communication of any sort with his relatives" and "drinking nothing but ale," having retired there, some say, because of an unhappy love affair. He died at Oxford in May, 1648, "an aged bachelor in Penny-farthing Street, after he had lived a melancholy and retired life many years." He was buried on May 28, in Christchurch Cathedral.

The plays in question were written long before this period of

seclusion, and when he was still in his twenties (twenty-six to twenty-eight). At that time he presents certainly no pedantic figure, but rather that of a young man about town—a young man of the Renaissance to be sure—friend of a writer of some note, his own works achieving publication, his family residence in London not far from theaters, and their country house in Sussex, which he could scarcely reach from Oxford without passing through that city. It is not possible that a young man of this character and with these connections knew nothing of the London theaters. It was not the lack of seeing Burbage in *Hamlet* that kept Percy from being a good playwright.

Looked at without prejudice, his plays themselves show that he was familiar enough with the London theaters to know at least the outward details of their staging. For example, there are two directions in *The Aphrodysiall* which could scarcely have been written by a man quite unacquainted with those theaters. One concerns a description of two of the parts in the play. The actors of these two parts were, Percy directs, to be bearded, but in a note he adds, "Thus for Actors; for Powles without." The other direction reads, "Chambers¹ (noise supposed for Powles) For actors."² The prologue both of *The Aphrodysiall* and of *The Errants* was to be delivered between the second and third "soundings," that is, the blasts of the trumpet announcing the beginning of the usual theatrical performance. In *The Errants*, I, 2, p. 10, Shift, a London pickpocket, says "Two pence is the price for the going in to a newe Playe there" (at Paul's). Note should also be made of Percy's somewhat peculiar use of "canopy" in his stage directions. In Graves's opinion³—and I think it is correct—Percy thus designates the rear stage of the London theater, and Graves finds in this very phrase an indication

¹ "Chambers" of course are small cannon. For a similar use of the word see *II Henry IV*, 4, 57, and for a direction for their employment, *Henry VIII*, I, 4.

² Percy's directions imply that he distinguished carefully between different stage conditions. Not only has he several references to "Paul's" and the "Actors," but he also mentions practices at the university plays and at private houses. Thus the direction last quoted, *The Aphrodysiall*, I, v, continues: "Also a shoure of Rose-water and confits, as was acted in Christ-Church in Oxford, in Dido and Aeneas—Guns without and Thunder thereto"; and *ibid.*, V, v, the direction preceding the Seventh Song reads: "Here went furth the whole Chorus in a shuffle as after a Play in a Lords howse, Hermes wafting them furth with his winged wand," etc.

³ *The Court and the London Theaters*, p. 12.

that this rear stage was like that shown on the *Messalina* title-page, a projecting "canopy" rather than a simple "alcove." Finally in proof of Percy's knowledge of London theatrical conditions may be cited a note from the manuscript volume:¹

A note to the Master of Children of Powles. Memorandum, that if any of the fine and formost of these Pastoralls and Comoedyes conteyned in this volume shall but overreach in length (the children not to begin before foure, after prayers, and the gates of Powles shutting at six) the tyme of supper, that then in tyme and place convenient, you do let passe some of the songs, and make the consort the shorter; for I suppose these plaies to be somewhat too long for that place. Howsoever, on your own experience, and at your best direction, be it. Farewell to you all.²

Certainly these "chambers," "canopies," "soundings," these "consorts" of music Percy so systematically "knocks up" between the acts of his plays; the knowledge of prices, of times of performance, and of differences of equipment between the men's theaters and Paul's—all this points to no secluded pedant immersed in *Plautus* and Terence, but to a fairly observant, theatrically well-informed Elizabethan playgoer.

It is this playgoer who writes these plays, which he ardently hopes to get performed in London. How ardently, appears from the changes in them which he so eagerly, so copiously suggests, in the hope that this will make their production more possible. He will most of the time be all things to all theaters. The directions already quoted show this in part: beards may be left off; the noise of cannon supposed; according to the direction so often quoted, certain properties may even be represented by their "nuncupations only in text letters." He will allow the manager to do almost anything to his plays just so they really get put on. That a man so anxious and so well acquainted with the theaters should still write plays as completely opposed to the customs of those theaters as Albright supposes is absolutely inconceivable.

But I would not be misunderstood. I do not maintain nor have I ever maintained that these plays of Percy's were actually given in

¹ Collier, *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, III, 377.

² It is frequently asserted (for example, Schelling, I, 465), I think on the basis of this note, that *Necromantes* was acted by Paul's. Though the note is appended to *Necromantes* it clearly applies to all the plays, and does not prove their production, but only Percy's desire for it.

the London theaters. That has not been and perhaps cannot be either proved or disproved. Nor have I maintained that Percy was a dramatist of any power. He seems rather a pretty feeble sort of person. He may not have known—he probably did not know—the technical details of Elizabethan stage management, but he did know the obvious things, what the average spectator would know. And it is just these obvious customs which his plays have been used to establish. For these they are thoroughly competent, and Albright's objections to them are unfounded, the result of prejudice, and supported only by misunderstanding and the disregard of accessible evidence.

GEORGE F. REYNOLDS

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

